

Let's Read the AD&D 2nd Edition

Monstrous Manual

Introduction

In early 2008 I discovered the website www.rpg.net. I was living in Japan at the time, in a lucrative but boring job which allowed me rather a lot of free time. As with most Japanese jobs I had very little work to do but leaving the office early was frowned upon, so I usually put in daily 10 hour shifts. At least 4 of those hours were spent reading and writing about roleplaying games, whether on that website or on my blog.

One thing I noticed early was that I was spending altogether too much time becoming involved in arguments with other posters about the relative merits of a given version of this game or that. This was all too common at that website. So I decided to do something more constructive, and noticed that a fellow poster (with the moniker (un)reason – who became involved in this story directly, as you will notice), was reading every single edition of *Dragon* magazine from its very inception and putting his thoughts in a forum thread.

I immediately latched onto this idea, and decided on a particularly miserable rainy Tuesday to begin doing something similar with the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Manual*. The plan was to comment on a single monster from that book in a single post every day, and let readers chime in with ideas on how to use the monster in a game of D&D. Little did I realise the project would take 2 years to complete, comprise 5000+ posts, take up 780,000 words, and result in 4 thread closures for exceeding the size limit of rpg.net threads.

This PDF is the distilled end-product of all that work. It is more-or-less an undisturbed, unchanged and unabridged copy of all of those 5000+ posts. I have made minimal formatting changes to try as much as possible to have new entries begin on new pages, and deleted a grand total of two words. The rest is reproduced “as is”. I felt that to run a spellchecker would spoil the purity of the original, so it remains (endearingly, to my eye) full of spelling and grammatical errors. This is in the nature of forum posting and it would somehow deny the unique character of its medium to impose too much order. The somewhat chaotic nature of the finished product pleases me for this reason.

Re-reading the thing as I edited it was a great pleasure. Not only is it full of bursting with creative ideas that any DM of any edition of D&D would think of as a veritable diamond mine for his or her game. It is also genuinely interesting in places, genuinely funny in others, and genuinely just plain weird all the way through. It starts slowly and quickly builds a rhythm and a momentum all of its own. Regular contributors will, I’m sure, fondly remember the in-jokes (PETA girl, Greek and Latin plurals, our friends the “sages”, monster-corpse-armour, egg-thievery, and moaning about the poor artwork). New readers will discover just what a bunch of RPG geeks can come up with when they put their minds to it: sheer unadulterated *ideas* for your game, plain and simple.

Working on the thread was a pleasure and I’d like to thank everybody who contributed – you know who you are, because your names and posts are here for all to see.

Finally, if you would like to read more of the ramblings of noisms, you can visit my blog at <http://monstersandmanuals.blogspot.com>; or, if you would like to comment on the contents or contact me in relation to anything in it, you can email me at jean.delumeau@gmail.com.

Happy reading!

noisms, 12/08/2011

[Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [A-Gi]

If everybody else is doing it.

Actually, I love the AD&D 2nd edition Monstrous Manual because it was, believe it or not, the first role playing book I *ever bought*. I have a lot of fond memories of being twelve years old and, on a long car journey, sitting and reading the thing from cover to cover and having my tiny brain almost explode from imagination overload. I'm hoping to recreate some of that here, as well as generate some publicity for those oft-overlooked but pretty cool monsters that inhabit the volume's nooks and crannies - as well as make fun of some silly pictures. (Does anybody remember the Roper picture? I think I could have done better. Actually I think a blind elephant on one of those animal therapy sessions could have done better. But there you go.)

Anyway, without further ado, we're going to plunge right into the nitty-gritty and start off our journey with that stalwart of many an AD&D campaign, the mighty...

...Aarakocra!!!!!!

Okay, so it isn't that mighty. Nor is it a stalwart of many an AD&D campaign. In fact, I don't think I've ever seen it make an appearance in a game, or even draw passing mention. One of the idiosyncracies of having an A-Z monster guide is that there's a good possibility you're going to start off with an anticlimax, I suppose. Why didn't they put the Tarrasque at page 1 and start with a bang?

I'm being a bit mean to the Aarakocra, actually. I have *thought* about using them, perhaps as often as twice in my life. They're one of the myriad of rarely used low-level mook monsters which I like to call the *orc-alternatives*; the gang of charlies who come off the substitute bench when slaying orcs and goblins has gotten boring. Crabmen, Mongrelmen, Troglodytes, Tasloi, Miconids....that nefarious ilk. But the interesting thing that sets the Aarakocra apart is the ability to **fly**, which makes them a good challenge even up to level 6 if they're used in large numbers and grouped with their old pals the air elementals. I can envisage a group of player characters trying to climb up a snow-capped mountain, simultaneously trying to avoid being blown off into the abyss while dodging javelin-dives from angry bird-men.

Technically the Aarakocra's alignment is Neutral Good, which I suppose means the PCs are more likely to use them as allies than enemies, and they're useful for that too; it's always good to have guides who can fly, and luckily the Aarakocra, although reasonably intelligent, can "[be convinced] to serve as a guide or a scout in exchange for a shiny jewel or coin." Presumably this is because of their bird-like origins. It also makes them about the cheapest buys in the entire book - there aren't many creatures in it that can be palmed off with a single coin. ("There, bird-man, go buy yourself something nice. Don't spend it all at once.")

They're also notable for being, I think, one of the only two D&D monsters who can raise a snigger from a 12 year old for having a silly name. (Aara**COCK**ra... *chortle*.)

More to follow.

(un)reason

04-17-2008 12:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Aaracockra were cool in my mind because they were the first entry in the complete book of humanoids, and could fly without being overpowered. This meant that when it came to building PC's in the days of massive numbers of splatbooks mid 2nd ed, they had a good deal of ooh shiny factor, without the worry of instantly being disallowed by the GM for being broken.

noisms

04-17-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8742892)

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Ah, the Complete Book of Humanoids. Never was there a larger collection of "Things to Unbalance Your Game."

weasel fierce

04-17-2008 01:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always thought they were neat, but I cant say we ever used them.

A storyline about how they fight some winged evil race for dominance of the mountain peaks would be cool. Each tribe would have a dragon as their "god"

brianm

04-17-2008 02:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8742675)

...as well as make fun of some silly pictures. (Does anybody remember the Roper picture? I think I could have done better. Actually I think a blind elephant on one of those animal therapy sessions could have done better. But there you go.)

Yeah, I like most of the art in the Monstrous Manual. DiTerlizzi completely changed the way I looked at and used hobgoblins, for instance. But just about everything by Jeff Butler is painful to look at. :(

I loved to use the aaracockra as part of my ancient triumvirate. In ancient times, before the rise of men and when elves still cavorted in the fairie realms (yes, I had the "feywild" long before 4th edition :D), the world was ruled and fought over by three races: the aaracockra, the thri-kreen, and the lizard folk. The ancient ruins of all three races can still be found if you know where to look, and each houses both magic and dangers the world hasn't seen since those far ancient days. The current, degenerate forms of all three races shun such places, and call them cursed, so adventurers looking to plunder these primordial cities shouldn't look for help from the descendants of their builders.

- Brian

Piestrio

04-17-2008 04:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Subscribed :)

Piestrio

noisms

04-17-2008 09:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8743534)

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Sometimes you get a wonderful, evocative, eerie, delicate, beautiful DiTerlizzi piece on the *opposite page* to a Jeff Butler scrawl, and it really makes you wonder what they were thinking. In fact I've found myself getting put off using the monsters that Jeff Butler illustrated for, just because the pictures ruin completely whatever image or atmosphere is conjured up in the text.

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That's a great idea. I'm actually running a jungle-exploration game on a PBP site at the moment, which is all about exploring ancient overgrown ruins. No Aarakocra are planned, but I can see where they might come in.

noisms

04-17-2008 10:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

So moving swiftly on, and second monster in we've already come to our first Boss-type "I lurk at the bottom of the dungeon waiting for my chance to TPK your arses" creature....

the Aboleth

...which is also, interestingly, the first psionic creature we encounter. I've already mentioned that this book was the first

to do with role playing that I ever bought, so I have quite a clear memory of reading the entry from the Aboleth and thinking, *What the hell is all this Dis/Sci/Dev and EW, II PsC +1 TS IF TW nonsense?* God, when you think about it, early psionics was bloody complicated.

The Aboleth, for those who don't know, is a "loathsome amphibious creature" that basically looks like a 20' sturgeon with three eyes, four tentacles, and - get this - "four pulsating blue-black orifices [which] line the bottom of its body and secrete gray slime that smells like rancid grease." So don't invite it to dinner. It'll make such a mess of the carpet.

I'd be surprised if you don't know this monster back to front already, though - the Aboleth has been a stalwart of the early mid-level game, in my experience, through all the editions; it makes at least one appearance per campaign, and always gets a familiar groan from players. Like when they encounter Mind Flayers, or Grell.

The Aboleth has a number of nasty abilities - favourite among them being the way it can touch you with its tentacles and turn your skin into a transparent membrane that has to be in permanent contact with water or else cause you a heck of a lot of damage. It can also try to force you into slavery through its telepathy, which can be negated by, apparently a *remove curse* or *dispel magic* spell.

That last ability is typical of the eccentricities and inconsistencies of AD&D 2nd edition design, actually. A psionic-based attack which is cancelled through magical spells which, when you think about it logically, shouldn't make a difference. Telepathy is neither a curse nor magic, so why on earth would *remove curse* or *dispel magic* work to negate it? Well, the obvious answer is that the designers thought up this cool ability, but realised that most parties don't have any sort of defence against psionic attack - so they had to crowbar in a magical defence instead.

I think of this sort of thing as being part of AD&D's charm, but I can understand why the 3.X edition fans hate it so much. It's everywhere in this book, though, so get used to it.

Anyway, more soon.

Smartmonkey

04-17-2008 12:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Be careful man. I dug my copy out a few weeks ago (just for the nostalgia, see...) and now I'm in the midst of putting together a Birthright game. 2e, for all it's warts, is refreshing in it's own way. My game, using purely the PHB + BRCS for chargen, is surprisingly low on crunch...

Subscribed.

Julius Sleazer

04-17-2008 12:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The *Monstrous Manual* is tied with ICE's *Creatures of Middle-Earth* for my all-time favorite FRPG bestiary.

noisms

04-17-2008 01:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Julius Sleazer (Post 8746160)

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I'm a big fan of FRPG bestiaries - even for games I've never played. (I've never played ICE's MERP, for example, but like that bestiary too.) I just love how they distill into book form the imaginations of an entire group of really imaginative people - and possible slightly warped people too. It also sets my mind off in all kinds of weird directions; already I'm thinking "How can I come up with a campaign involving Aarakocra and Aboleths....?" and having my brain overload with silly but brilliant ideas.

I once read an interview with the fantasy writer China Mieville who said that even though he stopped role playing decades ago, he still buys loads of FRPG bestiaries, just for that very reason.

noisms

04-17-2008 01:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8746135)

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Subscribed.

Birthright. Now you're talking!

Smartmonkey

04-17-2008 01:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746180)

Birthright. Now you're talking!

I found the box set for 10 bucks at a used book store. It was missing Ruins of Empire, but that same shop had the Rjurik highlands on sale for 3 bucks, so I snatched that up too.

My PC's are now the rulers/high druid/court seer of Kvigland.

Julius Sleazer

04-17-2008 01:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746176)

I'm thinking "How can I come up with a campaign involving Aarakocra and Aboleths....?" and having my brain overload with silly but brilliant ideas.

For me it's Mongrelmen, Bullywugs, Broken Ones, and Kuo-Toa.

:)

brianm

04-17-2008 01:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I love aboleth, though I prefer the Holloway (?) illustrations of it from 1st edition.

I never played with psionics, so I just gave it a sorta "cone of cold, but really mental pain waves" sorta attack. I did the same thing for the mindflayers.

I also love to place aboleth as big-time movers and shakers in the ancient, primordial past. Taking a page from Lovecraft, I had the aboleth as coming from beyond the stars and attempting to settle upon the campaign world. They made war against the titans for dominion, and in the process created all sorts of malevolent psionic monsters to be their minions, including the intellect devourer and thought eater. The titans countered by first creating horrors like cloaklers, beholders, and displacer beasts, but had more luck with puddings and slimes and gelatinous cubes, who were completely immune to the psychic powers of the aboleth.

In the end, of course, the aboleth were driven underground. The titans were weakened by the struggle, however, and were overthrown by their children, who set themselves up as gods. When the gods left the Prime Material, nobody thought to lock up monsters created to fight the aboleth, and they were allowed to run free and torment the fledgling intelligent races who were just coming into their own. The aboleth remain hidden in the deep places, waiting for their chance to try once more take over the world.

- Brian

noisms

04-17-2008 02:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

(Just because I have the time, and the inclination, I'm putting up another one for today. You lucky lucky people.)

Ankheg

Another old friend which has been a staple since the very beginning of the game. The Ankheg is an "enormous many-legged worm" which lies underneath the ground, then bursts out and GETS you with acidic spit and big mandibles. The rules for it are highly detailed - possibly far more than they need to be. Not only is the adult Ankheg described, but so are the young, as well as the mating habits, breeding habits, method of hibernation, and what happens when they shed their skin. (It would be a really creative DM who had his characters encounter an Ankheg in the middle of growing a new skin, but I suppose it's something different - extra spice for the game.) I like the "parents with young" style encounter because it can face your players with a genuine moral quandary if they are so inclined - is it right to

slaughter the harmless young of an animal? - but I'm not sure I can see the point in knowing about an Ankheg's mating habits. (After mating, the the female kills the male, and the young feed on his corpse. Just imagine that, chaps.)

Reading entries like this makes me wonder at the kind of games the designers must have been playing. Did the information that Ankhegs are good for farmland, in recycling the soil, ever become relevant to their games? Did any of them ever actually use an Ankheg shell for armour? (AC 2, if dried and cured.) Or its spit for acid? It's hard to tell. They're interesting ideas, but I just don't see them coming into one of my games without taking on greater significance in the players' minds than what they're *supposed* to be doing.

For example, I keep seeing myself introducing the topic of farmers who secretly encourage Ankhegs into their lands in order to surreptitiously enrich their soil and gain unfair advantage over their neighbours. But the Ankhegs then become responsible for a spike in the death of innocent farm labourers, which the farmers try to cover up and blame on a local inoffensive tribe of Mongrelmen. The problem is that I can imagine this little vignette becoming more important than the plot of the campaign itself.

Actually...scratch that, it's an awesome idea. I'm yanking it. From myself.

UglyJimStudly

04-17-2008 02:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746319)

Reading entries like this makes me wonder at the kind of games the designers must have been playing. Did the information that Ankhegs are good for farmland, in recycling the soil, ever become relevant to their games?

That stuff was in vogue for 2E because the "Ecology of..." articles in Dragon were wildly, ridiculously popular, and they were loaded with that kind of info. Lots of people wrote in saying that stuff should be in the MM. And so in 2E, it was made so.

Quote:

For example, I keep seeing myself introducing the topic of farmers who secretly encourage Ankhegs into their lands in order to surreptitiously enrich their soil and gain unfair advantage over their neighbours. But the Ankhegs then become responsible for a spike in the death of innocent farm labourers, which the farmers try to cover up and blame on a local inoffensive tribe of Mongrelmen. The problem is that I can imagine this little vignette becoming more important than the plot of the campaign itself.

Actually...scratch that, it's an awesome idea. I'm yanking it. From myself.

And this is why it was wildly, ridiculously popular. The main "problems" with including all that in the monster writeups is you basically get far more adventure hooks than you'll ever be able to use, and as you note it can distract from the main storyline. I don't actually see either as a bad thing, but enough people did to make WOTC decide the pagespace could better be used on more monsters with less fluff.

I never actually picked up the 2e Monstrous Manual - I was a big fan of the Monstrous Compendium format, where the monsters were sold as packs of pages that could be added to a ring binder. Sadly, that never caught on, I wanted to see all the rulebooks printed that way.

noisms

04-17-2008 03:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8746366)

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Actually the more I think about it the less of a bad thing I see it as. I suppose it depends on the kind of campaign you're running - if it has an epic plot arc such little distractions can be a refreshing change from the main story.

brianm

04-17-2008 04:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ah, the ankheg...

Actually, I got nothin'. :D

I hardly ever used them in my games. Move along, nothing to see here.

- Brian

Captain Thark

04-17-2008 04:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I love the Monstrous Manual to death. It was one of the first RPG books I ever had. Picked it up used and I'd spend hours just reading that wonderful book. I love how it's almost a campaign setting, with all it's cool world info. Every monster seemed to be either A) cannon fodder, B) A Boss or C) An adventure waiting to be written.

It still seems odd to me that while the Player's Handbook and Dungeon Master's Guide in 2e are some of the driest D&D core books ever written, the Monstrous Manual is by far the best written bestiary of any edition.

noisms

04-17-2008 04:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8746574)

Ah, the ankheg...

Actually, I got nothin'. :D

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- Brian

Maybe now you will. Some day you'll be sitting down to plan out an encounter for a campaign and you'll think "Why not the Ankheg?" all because of this thread. And my work will have been done. ;)

Wakboth

04-17-2008 04:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8745556)

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Oh, yes. The book would have been **much** better served by using DiTerlizzi illustrations throughout.

I loved the MM when I got it, and I love it still, even though I'm only slightly more likely to run a 2e game than to sprout wings and take flight. It's the sort of a book you can pick from your shelf, open randomly, and start reading, and always find something interesting, neat or engrossing.

It's not flawless, though; there are some weird filler monsters, umpty-teen pages of giants split by ecological niches ("Mountain giants are different from hill giants who are different from stone giants..."), and some entries, which have been condensed from larger lists are incomplete (the slaadi one is particularly lacking, IIRC.)

noisms

04-17-2008 05:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8746659)

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Yeah, and the Baatezu and Tanar'ri entries are a bit rubbish. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. ;)

I disagree with you on the giants, by the way. I love some of the obscure ones.

DMH

04-17-2008 10:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Aboleths- love 'em, but more for the concept of skum. They are masters of breeding and monster making. Their alien appearance and aquatic nature makes them that much more interesting.

Ankhegs- once I saw a player charm one and use it as a tunneling machine. The castle siege was very short after the walls came down.

an_idol_mind

04-17-2008 10:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746319)

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I actually liked this aspect of the Monstrous Manual a lot. It fleshed out the monsters a bit, but also wasn't so fully integrated into the game mechanics that it couldn't be changed if needed. I sorely wish that 3rd edition had used the Monstrous Manual's formatting of one monster per page plus some societal notes earlier on.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746319)

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The Baldur's Gate computer game had a side quest where the party could go on an ankheg hunt but were required to kill no more than 10 ankhegs lest they cause damage to the surrounding farmland. It also had ankheg shell armor.

Regarding the farmland thing, I really don't think it makes any sense. No matter what those guys might do for the soil (and realistically, they wouldn't make it better to farm at all), I can't imagine any farmer who isn't a retired adventurer deciding to set up shop near a hive of giant acid-spitting bugs with shells harder than plate mail and a tendency to eat livestock.

noisms

04-17-2008 10:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by an_idol_mind (Post 8747300)

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Yeah, looking back at what I wrote I think I came across as a bit harsher than I meant to be. Reading the societal notes is interesting and sets off all kinds of good ideas. I just meant that it was hard to imagine when that information would ever be useful in game. (Then I went ahead and pretty much contradicted myself anyway!)

noisms

04-17-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I won't be able to keep up the pace for long, but work is slow and I've got nothing better to do, so...

Arcane

First off, it has to be said this is our first genuinely awful illustration. A blue chump with a big head, basically, which discourages me from using the very monster itself through its sheer... *I-could-have-done-better*-edness. (In the Planescape Monstrous Compendium I or II - I forget which - there's a much better picture of an Arcane by, guess who, Tony DiTerlizzi.) This is a shame, because Arcanes are a good addition to any campaign - a race of aloof, inscrutable interplanar magical item traders who behave like primadonnas but can end up selling you something really cool if you play your cards right. I would like to one day create a set of random-and-unusual magic item generation tables for Arcanes, so that when players come across one they can end up with the chance to buy all kinds of weird, wonderful and random nonsense.

There are two rather eccentric – I'm tempted to use the word 'arcane' but will restrain myself - rules in the racial description. First, apparently all Arcanes are telepathically linked across the multiverse, so that if one is killed all the others immediately know about it and will never trade with the perpetrator ever again. A bit like one of those subatomic particles that eerily knows where all the other ones are. I forget the name. A higgs-boson? Anyway, this rule just screams out as a crowbarred-in way to police PCs and prevent them from killing every Arcane they come across and, well, stealing their stuff; it's typical of 2nd edition, with its slight finger-wagging attitude and tendency to moralise. (I suppose it stems from the reaction against devil-worship allegations.)

Second, there is the frankly quite odd rule that "if the PCs actively look for one" there is a 10% chance per day of finding an Arcane. No context at all; just if the PCs spend enough time searching, they'll find one - although there is a hint that the chance does increase or decrease depending on location. Was there ever a more pointless rule? Why not base it on good role playing, with characters asking around and persuading merchants to divulge secrets or rumours? Or why not just use the information gathering proficiency? It's yet another example of early D&D's odd impulse to create one-off rules, completely unconnected to everything else, for one-off situations. Exception-based design, I think

it's called: we'll see a lot of it over the coming weeks as I delve deeper into the tome.

Anyway, the obvious adventure hook for an Arcane is to have them hire the adventurers as bodyguards, which I suppose would work well in a low-grade, does-what-it-says-on-the-tin sort of way. I'd rather just use them as a very occasional special NPC guest, though; a mysterious merchant passing through and selling his wares, nothing to see here, kind of like Neko in the old SNES Squaresoft game *Secrets of Mana*, if anybody is old and geeky enough to remember that.

UglyJimStudly

04-18-2008 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8746511)

Actually the more I think about it the less of a bad thing I see it as. I suppose it depends on the kind of campaign you're running - if it has an epic plot arc such little distractions can be a refreshing change from the main story.

Mostly I think it's just the age-old clash of styles - sandbox campaigns vs. storyline campaigns. They're great for a sandbox, because there's plenty of hooks for players to latch onto, not so great for storylines because those hooks may not fit into the story the DM wants to present. Hard to please all the people all the time.

Lugh

04-18-2008 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8746366)

I never actually picked up the 2e Monstrous Manual - I was a big fan of the Monstrous Compendium format, where the monsters were sold as packs of pages that could be added to a ring binder. Sadly, that never caught on, I wanted to see all the rulebooks printed that way.

I liked the Monstrous Compendium format, too. My only problem became that, as I bought more and more expansions, I couldn't actually put them in alphabetical order. With one monster on each side of the page, and some monsters spanning multiple pages, it became impossible to interleave the pages logically.

I always had it mind to buy a used photocopier, and put each monster on its own sheet. One side would have a big version of the art, along with the societal notes. The other side would have the stats and combat abilities. Thus, when the encounter happens, you could say, "You see...THIS!" and hold up the page with none of the stats. Of course, I never got around to it. I bet I could do a much better job these days, with a scanner.

UglyJimStudly

04-18-2008 02:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8748057)
I liked the Monstrous Compendium format, too.

I was a huge fan of the *Thieves' Guild* stuff way back when, which was initially released in a similar format. My favourite thing about that format is that I could customize my rulebooks for each adventure or campaign; if I was running one of TSR's modules, I could grab just the monsters I needed for that session to bring to wherever we were playing. If they'd done the PHB, DMG, and Complete Whatever books in the same format, I wouldn't have gone through so many backpacks during the 90s.

Quote:

I always had it mind to buy a used photocopier, and put each monster on its own sheet. One side would have a big version of the art, along with the societal notes. The other side would have the stats and combat abilities. Thus, when the encounter happens, you could say, "You see...THIS!" and hold up the page with none of the stats. Of course, I never got around to it. I bet I could do a much better job these days, with a scanner.

Yeah, nowadays scanners, PDF, decent free software for formatting and layout, and relatively cheap laser printers make rulebook customization much simpler.

demiurge1138

04-18-2008 06:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8747450)
I won't be able to keep up the pace for long, but work is slow and I've got nothing better to do, so...

Arcane

snip

Ah, arcanes. Never thought I'd say this the first time I picked up a Monstrous Compendium (my first gaming book too!) but I love these guys. I've used them on numerous occasions, in their 3e incarnation as "mercanes" (much better name, in that it isn't an ordinary English word that's used commonly in D&D). Even played one in an abortive epic-level game--a cleric of Boccob who viewed his faith as a long term exchange of services. Boccob gave him phenomenal cosmic power, the mercane brought him new converts to the faith.

I like arcanes/mercanes because they make D&D's implied magic item economy make more sense. Sure, that merchant who just bought that +2 longsword off of you might not find another adventurer to buy it, but those friendly blue men will swing around soon enough and trade it for magic items that will get sold, or maybe just enough food and sundries to keep that merchant happy and comfortable for a year.

noisms

04-18-2008 10:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8749516)

I like arcanes/mercanes because they make D&D's implied magic item economy make more sense. Sure, that merchant who just bought that +2 longsword off of you might not find another adventurer to buy it, but those friendly blue men will swing around soon enough and trade it for magic items that will get sold, or maybe just enough food and sundries to keep that merchant happy and comfortable for a year.

That's true. I also like the air of mystery surrounding them. They just turn up, trade, and move on; nobody knows where to, and nobody knows where they came from.

noisms

04-18-2008 11:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Argos

I find it hard to think of this monster without having two things come into mind: first, one of those cheesy "blob from outer space" B-movies from the 1950s, and second a British mail-order firm of the same name. So I have a tough time taking it seriously. I have images of people in black & white running shrieking in terror from a glossy mail order catalogue.

Great, over the top description in the text, though: "An argos resembles a giant amoeba. It has one large, central eye with a tripartite pupil, and a hundred lashless, inhuman eyes and many sharp-toothed mouths. An argos can extrude several pseudopods, each tipped with a fanged maw that functions as a hand to manipulate various tools."

A hundred lashless, inhuman eyes. Okay, so poor man's Lovecraft. But I like it.

The Argos has various ways to mess with your head - either by attacking you with regular objects, enfolding you in a pseudopod, enveloping you and swallowing you whole, or blasting you with rays from its many eyes. You know - the lashless inhuman ones. (There's a brilliant, unintentionally funny line here: "The eyes of an argos, like those of a beholder, have a variety of special powers. An argos can bring 1d10 of its smaller eyes to bear on any target. The large, central eye can focus only on targets that are in front of the creature (within 90 degrees of the "straight-ahead point" of the central eye). Though the creature has nearly 100 eyes, only 20 special powers have been noted; therefore a number of eyes must possess the same power." Come on guys, admit it. You just couldn't think of 100 different powers for all the eyes to have.)

Anyway, the eye attacks are randomly determined and of various degrees of nastiness - which is to say boring ones like *Darkness 15' Radius*, weird ones like *Tongues*, bog-standard ones like *Burning Hands*, and a couple of interesting things like *Heat Metal* and *Suggestion*. Most of them seem more geared to the "annoying monster" archetype than the "straight up fighty monster" one; the Argos is one of those creatures that DMs love and players love to hate - a tricky ambusher illusionist/ESP type beastie.

More largely pointless 'Ecology' type information: the Argos gradually loses HD over time if it doesn't eat, but on reaching 5 HD it can enter hibernation for a year. This is the first 'ecology' type snippet in the book so far that I've read and thought - "Nah, that does nothing for me." No adventure hook to see here. Move along.

demiurge1138

04-18-2008 11:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The argos is one of those monsters in the book that suffers from a recolored Tom Baxa illustration - the original B&W illustrations were moody and sharp-edged, when Baxa does his own colors, it's in effectively sickly pastels... but the argos in the Monstrous Compendium is just tacky (as is the blue slaad later in the book).

I do like the idea of argos as translator, though. Some beholder or neogi merchant prince has one enslaved to shoot himself and his guests (slaves, clients, whatever) with language beams so they can better understand each other.

Halvormerlinakyad

04-18-2008 05:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

You realize it was originally called the Monstrous Compendium, right? I've got both my binders and numerous supplements to prove it.

noisms

04-18-2008 05:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Halvormerlinakyad (Post 8751724)

You realize it was originally called the Monstrous Compendium, right? I've got both my binders and numerous supplements to prove it.

Yeah, I know. I'm reading the white, hardback combined supplement "AD&D Monstrous Manual", which brought together all the monsters from Monstrous Compendium I and II.

Halvormerlinakyad

04-18-2008 06:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8751731)

Yeah, I know. I'm reading the white, hardback combined supplement "AD&D Monstrous Manual", which brought together all the monsters from Monstrous Compendium I and II.

He's a witch! Burn him!:D

noisms

04-18-2008 06:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Halvormerlinakyad (Post 8751803)
He's a witch! Burn him!:D

What can I say? I was 12 years old when I bought it, I knew no better! ;)

noisms

04-19-2008 10:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Aurumvorax

Ah, this is more like it. After the poncy Arcane, the gloopy Argos, the slimy Aboleth and the weakling Aarakocra, we finally have a straight-up, no holds-barred furry little tough guy, the Aurumvorax.

Billed as a 3' long ball of fury, the Aurumvorax (or 'golden gorger') is basically a very bad-tempered, eight-legged badger which likes to eat gold and beat up adventurers. The picture makes it look like one of those vaguely ridiculous background aliens from the new Star Wars films, when all the possibilities of CGI had gone to George Lucas' head and he just started filling up every single shot with as many odd creatures as he could. "Eight legged golden badger alien? Okay, put that one in the background when Padme's ship flies into dock on Naboo. What's next? Irritating Jamaican racial-stereotype alien? Hmm, I like the sound of that..."

Anyway, for a 3' long and I imagine rather cute little beastie, the Aurumvorax is pretty nasty. Its AC and HD are better than respectable, and it can also do put you in a world of hurt – biting you and clinging on while doing 8 hp of damage per round until it or you are dead. As it has 12 HD, that could make for some close calls. So it's a typical random encounter enemy for a group of high mid-level characters, who would have to expend a fair bit of healing magic after coming across one. Once it's dead the Aurumvorax's hide can be turned into a garment of "incredible beauty" worth 15-20,000 gold pieces, which also functions as armour. Only a handful of monsters into the book and already we've come across two whose corpses can be made into armour. The designers really loved that particular shtick.

More somewhat pointless ecology information. Aurumvorax mate every eight years and have 1d6 plus 2 babies; only 1 or 2 of the babies tend to survive to adulthood. Right. So then.

Also dwarves "tend to dislike them" but sometimes train them to sniff out gold. And hey presto, an adventure hook appears. The adventurers are hired by dwarves to capture a live Aurumvorax kitten and bring it back for training, and all manner of crazy high jinks ensue....

demiurge1138

04-19-2008 11:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I sort of imagine the dwarves as good samaritans here; after all, most of the aurumvorax kitties will die, so the dwarves hire adventurers to scoop up a few and give them a chance at life.

Hm... aurumvorax versus rust monster cage match...

Wakboth

04-19-2008 04:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I never used an aurumvorax in any game, but I've always thought it's a pretty nifty critter. It has a certain mythological vibe to it (perhaps because of the name), as if it was described by some medieval bestiarist with an unusual grasp of ecology and metallurgy. :)

noisms

04-19-2008 06:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8756107)

I never used an aurumvorax in any game, but I've always thought it's a pretty nifty critter. It has a certain mythological vibe to it (perhaps because of the name), as if it was described by some medieval bestiarist with an unusual grasp of ecology and metallurgy. :)

I agree. But I always thought the introduction into D&D of Latin and Greek sounding words was a bit weird. I mean, those cultures never existed in the standard D&D settings.

noisms

04-19-2008 06:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8755579)

I sort of imagine the dwarves as good samaritans here; after all, most of the aurumvorax kitties will die, so the dwarves hire adventurers to scoop up a few and give them a chance at life.

Aww, doesn't it just make you feel all warm and cuddly inside?

Pete Whalley

04-19-2008 09:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8756341)

I agree. But I always thought the introduction into D&D of Latin and Greek sounding words was a bit weird. I mean, those cultures never existed in the standard D&D settings.

Good point. Whenever my players bring it up I just tell them it's Elven.

Works for me.

weasel fierce

04-19-2008 11:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The Auromvorax is a critter I wish I had used in a game.

demiurge1138

04-20-2008 03:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pete Whalley (Post 8756657)

Good point. Whenever my players bring it up I just tell them it's Elven.

Works for me.

Draconic was my go-to excuse for a while.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Baatezu

When you look at the 2nd edition Monstrous Manual one of the things that surprises you is that the Baatezu and Tanar'ri ever took off as mighty 'bad guy' races. (I suspect it was due to a combination of their being based on the old and fondly remembered devils and demons, and on their complete re-imagining in the Planescape campaign setting, where they were made decidedly better in every respect.) Their entries in this volume are sparse, dry, and accompanied by some of the least impressive art in the book: the Pit Fiend looks like a sumo wrestler on his way to a Halloween party; the Abishai looks like a gargoyle in the middle of having a bowel movement. (The other types are mentioned, but not detailed either in picture or statistical form.)

The Baatezu also have the weakest and least interesting blurb so far, and for quite a while afterwards: a cursory explanation that they hate the Tanar'ri a whole lot, and that they really are jolly nasty. Then the text dives straight into their special abilities - and there really isn't much to say about that either. It seems Pit Fiends can cast a *Wish* spell once a year - I'd forgotten about that. I suppose a really evil DM could use that to huge advantage. "The Pit Fiend Ashjsajghsfgsfd decides to cast his yearly wish spell this round...." Oddly, the Pit Fiend's strength is only 1800 - a reminder of how D&D used to be, before 36 Point Buys and the like made a strength of 18 a regular occurrence for even a bog standard fighter character. I don't have the 3rd edition MM to hand, but surely the Pit Fiend's strength can't still be at the 18 or 19 mark. Is it?

One thing I did like about this entry when I was reading it as a kid was that it hinted about this whole other body of interesting-sounding background information that I wasn't privy to. The Nine Hells? The Prime Material Plane? What on earth were they? Other than that aspect (which obviously applies only to newcomers to the game) the Baatezu entry is really just a bit dull.

There are some good entries coming up though. (And no, I'm not talking about the ones for Beetles or Birds.)

an_idol_mind

04-20-2008 10:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8758874)

Baatezu

I don't have the 3rd edition MM to hand, but surely the Pit Fiend's strength can't still be at the 18 or 19 mark. Is it?

37 according to the SRD. Also, they still have the yearly wish capability.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by an_idol_mind (Post 8758895)

37 according to the SRD. Also, they still have the yearly wish capability.

Wow. What a reminder how things have changed. 37 as opposed to 1800. "Edition power creep" at work, I suppose.

UglyJimStudly

04-20-2008 12:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8756341)

I agree. But I always thought the introduction into D&D of Latin and Greek sounding words was a bit weird. I mean, those cultures never existed in the standard D&D settings.

Didn't the Aurumvorax debut in *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*? I always figured the name was supposed to be part of its scientific name, the only part of the nameplate left legible after it burst out of its cage.

noisms

04-20-2008 12:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8759115)

Didn't the Aurumvorax debut in Expedition to the Barrier Peaks? I always figured the name was supposed to be part of its scientific name, the only part of the nameplate left legible after it burst out of its cage.

I've never played that adventure, believe it or not. (In fact, in around 15 years of playing D&D, I've never played in a published adventure.)

brianm

04-20-2008 12:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Before 3rd edition, increasing a stat by even one point is something an adventurer got to do maybe once in a lifetime. So it's more power-leap than creep by my estimation. ;)

The baatezu were one of the reasons I continued to use my 1st edition monster books all the way through college, rather than convert over to the 2nd edition monster books, even though we played with the 2nd edition PHB. And I never really warmed to the whole Blood War thing, either.

- Brian

noisms

04-20-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8759139)

Before 3rd edition, increasing a stat by even one point is something an adventurer got to do maybe once in a lifetime. So it's more power-leap than creep by my estimation. ;)

The baatezu were one of the reasons I continued to use my 1st edition monster books all the way through college, rather than convert over to the 2nd edition monster books, even though we played with the 2nd edition PHB. And I never really warmed to the whole Blood War thing, either.

- Brian

Oh yeah, *wish* spell after *wish* spell to raise even one point. Now they get raised *automatically*.

Smartmonkey

04-21-2008 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

So I never really used the Batezu or Tanar'i in my 2e games, mostly because the critters statted in the monster manual weren't very cool. This "blood war" sounded neat, but I never quite grokked their stats.

And is it just me, or is 21k xp a LOT of xp for a critter with 4hd?

Anyways. Can anyone tell me what changed from 1e to 2e in regards to demons?

Juriel

04-21-2008 02:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Is this the manual where there is a race of catgirls who 'always roll their Rs'?

Say that one aloud. I'm sure that was no accident!

Wakboth

04-21-2008 02:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8760776)

And is it just me, or is 21k xp a LOT of xp for a critter with 4hd?

It's not just you, the XP values for baatezu and tanar'ri in 2e MM are horribly broken. I recalculated them at some point, using the guidelines in the 2e DMG, and found they were inflated by half or something similarly ridiculous.

Smartmonkey

04-21-2008 02:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8760842)

It's not just you, the XP values for baatezu and tanar'ri in 2e MM are horribly broken. I recalculated them at some point, using the guidelines in the 2e DMG, and found they were inflated by half or something similarly ridiculous.

I flipped my copy open to check, and, indeed, Black Abisashi have a measly 4 hit-dice, with an average of 16 hit points. Their AC isn't great, their attacks are fairly weak in terms of hp - they do have a fairly nasty poison, but two hits from a high strength warrior will drop one in a single round.

Netting him 21,500 xp.

Even when I was reading that at 12, I was going wtf.

Even with things like that, though, I still love the Monster Manual. I have it sitting next to me at the moment - 13 years of use shows, but it's still one of my favorite books on my shelf.

Neurotrash

04-21-2008 03:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

It's a long way off, but I can't wait to see what everyone's reaction is to the "Wolf" entry. I remember discovering it years after buying the MM because, really, who reads the fluff text on the "Wolf" entry? But one day I was flipping through and I happened to actually read it...wow.

To this day I wonder what twelve-year-old girl wrote that entry.

JasonK

04-21-2008 05:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8760776)

So I never really used the Batezu or Tanar'i in my 2e games, mostly because the critters statted in the monster manual weren't very cool. This "blood war" sounded neat, but I never quite grokked their stats.

And is it just me, or is 21k xp a LOT of xp for a critter with 4hd?

Anyways. Can anyone tell me what changed from 1e to 2e in regards to demons?

You mean statistically or conceptually? In the former case, I have no idea. In the later case, they were re-named and re-conceived as "evil extra-planar beings." In other words, they had previously been literal demons or devils - creatures of the pits of hell; in 2E they became, effectively, alien things, not actual religious in any way.

Personally, I never cared about the switch. I mean, I figured Tanari'i and Ba'atezu were the creatures' own way of referring to their species; humans and the like just used the D words. Planescape, of course, made using Devil or Demon just silly.

And I never meant to say any of that - I just meant to subscribe to this thread to catch all the commentary on the various undead out there. :)

~ jason

UglyJimStudly

04-21-2008 11:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8759139)

Before 3rd edition, increasing a stat by even one point is something an adventurer got to do maybe once in a lifetime.

Unless you took your example from some of the high-level modules, in which both stat gains and *Wish* were pretty standard rewards. Different styles in different groups and all that.

noisms

04-21-2008 12:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8760842)

It's not just you, the XP values for baatezu and tanar'ri in 2e MM are horribly broken. I recalculated them at some point, using the guidelines in the 2e DMG, and found they were inflated by half or something similarly ridiculous.

They were fixed in Planescape. I think Abishai in the first Planescape Monstrous Compendium give somewhere in the 3,000 range, off the top of my head. Pit Fiends are something like 25,000. Unfortunately those books are in another country in a box in my parents' loft.

chiguayante

04-21-2008 12:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8742675)

...Aarakocra!!!!!!

Ahh, so that's where WoW got their Arrakoa bird men from. I was wondering if there was precedent for that, apart from looking like Dark Crystal cast members. Anyone got links to the AD&D art for them? I'm a young guy who starting roleplaying in '99 and I never knew the likes of AD&D.

noisms

04-21-2008 12:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Banshee

The first undead monster in the book, and it's a good one - a wailing female spirit who can detect unwary bands of adventurers with unerring accuracy once they come within five miles of her den. She then pops up at night and wails at them, causing them to die instantly, "faces contorted with horror" (!) unless they pass a saving throw against death magic. She can only do this once a night though - so that's okay then. The sight of her is also enough to cause *fear*, which makes you flee for 10 rounds with a 50% chance of dropping what you're carrying. A pisser if you happened to have that handy *Vorpal Sword +5* you got from the red dragon's hoard drawn.

The 'ecology' section has it that the Banshee's only pleasure is "the misfortune and misery of others". But it seems to me that the poor woman wants nothing else other than for you to leave her alone - she'll keep returning to wail at you every night until you've gone away. Which you would, wouldn't you? Unless, I suppose, you were an intrepid band of adventurers.

As well as driving away adventurers, the Banshee's wailing and keening will also eventually kill of all the animals and vegetation surrounding her den, leaving a desolate five mile wasteland of dead trees and plants. Did somebody mention the words 'adventure hook'?

Following on from the discussion regarding the Baatezu, killing a Banshee will net you precisely 7,000 XP. That's right - a 7 HD monster that needs a +1 to hit and which can *kill you instantly* is only worth a third as much as the pathetic Black Abishai on the previous page. Did nobody notice this when they were compiling the MM? I mean, the entries are *right next to each other*.

Oh well. Inconsistencies are all part of 2nd edition's charm. And I like the Banshee. Any monster which represents the undead spirit of an evil female elf is worth having in a game, in my book, and her insta-death ability is enough to strike genuine fear into even quite high level adventurers. And we know how rare *that* is in any incarnation of D&D.

brianm

04-21-2008 02:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by chiguayante (Post 8762686)

Ahh, so that's where WoW got their Arrakoa bird men from. I was wondering if there was precedent for that, apart from looking like Dark Crystal cast members. Anyone got links to the AD&D art for them? I'm a young guy who started roleplaying in '99 and I never knew the likes of AD&D.

I don't have a link to the 2nd edition art, but here are the two black-and-white pics drawn by Jeff Dee for the 1st edition versions.

Full body

Closeup

- Brian

brianm

04-21-2008 02:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8760776)

Can anyone tell me what changed from 1e to 2e in regards to demons?

Mostly, the Blood War. All demons and devils were recast in terms of what they contributed to the Blood War. It became the cornerstone of their "ecologies".

Outside that, they all got tougher. The 1st edition Type II (Hezrou) has an AC of -2 and 9 hit dice. In 2nd edition, they dropped the "Type II", just called them Hezrou, and gave them -6 AC but still the same 9 hit dice. However, their magic resistance went from 55% to 70%, required +2 or better weapons to hit (where normal weapons would hit them in 1st edition), gained a troglodyte-like overpowering stench, and more magical powers.

- Brian

JasonK

04-21-2008 02:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8762739)

Banshee

No real ecology or origin, here? Just "an evil female elf gone undead"?

Makes me wonder, do all female elves who go evil become banshees? Is it a given? Or is it a choice, like lichdom? Does it happen automatically when they die, or maybe when they take that final action that pushes them inevitably to the evil end of the alignment spectrum? Or only should their graves be disturbed or someone die near their corpse?

~ jason

A Letter From Prague

04-21-2008 02:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8762978)

Makes me wonder, do all female elves who go evil become banshees?

Actually, it's all elves who aren't neutral good.

JasonK

04-21-2008 02:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by A Letter From Prague (Post 8763005)

Actually, it's all elves who aren't neutral good.

Eh?

~ jason

noisms

04-21-2008 02:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8762978)

No real ecology or origin, here? Just "an evil female elf gone undead"?

Makes me wonder, do all female elves who go evil become banshees? Is it a given? Or is it a choice, like lichdom? Does it happen automatically when they die, or maybe when they take that final action that pushes them inevitably to the evil end of the alignment spectrum? Or only should their graves be disturbed or someone die near their corpse?

~ jason

The Banshee doesn't have a very specific origin story, to be honest. It literally is just "the undead spirit of an evil female elf", who often hangs around in her old home amongst the possessions she had in life. It says somewhere near the end that they sometimes go out in pursuit of people who wronged them while they were alive. Another point where *cool idea for adventure* sirens sound off in my head.

noisms

04-21-2008 03:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Neurotrash (Post 8761085)

It's a long way off, but I can't wait to see what everyone's reaction is to the "Wolf" entry. I remember discovering it years after buying the MM because, really, who reads the fluff text on the "Wolf" entry? But one day I was flipping through and I happened to actually read it...wow.

To this day I wonder what twelve-year-old girl wrote that entry.

Oh yeah, the wolf entry is hilarious. It's like they picked up a leaflet from the local PETA office and lifted it word for word. But it's a long way off, so let's not spoil it. ;)

noisms

04-22-2008 10:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Basilisk

A set of three short entries for this monster, which is essentially a big lizard whose gaze can turn others to stone. It's a favourite of mine, and it often ends up making an appearance in my campaigns; it's good to have a monster which isn't generally defeated by combat or spells but *something else*, and I do love me a good mythological beast in a game. I'm also a fan of medusas for those very reasons.

The first entry is for the ordinary, bog-standard *Basilisk*. No ecologies here; no space for that. The Basilisk is a big lizard which turns you to stone. Job's a good 'un. Its gaze also works in the Astral and Ethereal planes, although I can't see myself ever using that. (In the Astral its gaze just kills you; in the Ethereal it turns you to 'Ethereal stone'. Ahh, Ethereal stone. Gotcha.)

The *Greater Basilisk* is, self-obviously, a big Basilisk. Not only can it petrify you, however, it can also kill you instantly with its halitosis breath or poison you with its claws. (Type K poison, for those who remember what that means. I'm sure Piestro's thread will explore it at some point.) I'd forgotten how many truly deadly monsters there were in earlier versions of D&D. In the space of a few pages we've had the Banshee, which can shriek you to death; the Basilisk, which can turn you to stone; and the Greater Basilisk, which can both petrify you *and* kill you instantly with poison. The versions of these monsters from 3rd edition onwards are noticeably less mean.

A bit ridiculously, the Greater Basilisk can only self-petrify through a reflective surface within 10' because it is short-sighted, but its petrification gaze is ordinarily effective to 50'. How on earth does that even begin to make sense?

Finally, there is the *Dracolisk*, which is the offspring of a Black Dragon and a Greater Basilisk. It spits acid, as you would expect, and can also fly for short periods. Its eyes have 'nictating membranes' which largely protect it from its own gaze; I don't know why they didn't just use that explanation for the Greater Basilisk too, rather than bring in this short-sighted nonsense. The Dracolisk is especially cool, I think, because it combines two of my favourite monster shticks: namely it's a mythological beast and it *also* implies the arcane experimentations of an evil archmage, which is a great fantasy trope.

noisms

04-23-2008 11:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bat

The first real life monster. Unless you believe in Banshees.

I like the descriptions of real-life animals in the MM. Did they really imagine there was anybody who'd be reading the book who wouldn't know what a bat was? Anyway, in case you didn't know, "The small body of the ordinary bat resembles a mouse, while the wings are formed from extra skin stretched across its fore limbs." Thanks, guys. Apparently bats are also "annoying but harmless."

The designers also add, sagely, that "The larger bats are scaled up but otherwise similar in appearance." Aha, I see.

Anyway, there are a few entries for different varieties of bat, all of them notably odd in some respect.

Ordinary Bat. This speaks for itself, but did you remember that a flock (a flock? Is that right?) of bats can put out torches (1% chance per round per bat), reduce THACO by 2, and force you to perform a Wisdom check to be able to cast a spell? I've never had that effect in one of my games, but I will in the next one!

Large Bats give you rabies (1% chance per bite), which basically means you'll be dead within 10 plus 1d4+6 days. In the meantime, there's a chance you'll become frenzied and attack the nearest person whenever you become frightened or startled. Ouch. It would be an evil DM who inflicted such a monster on a party without access to a *cure disease* spell. Mwahahahahahaaaaa.....

Huge Bats also have the vaguely silly moniker "Mobat". With a wingspan of 16', they're big beasties, and they have a "dim and evil intelligence" which means they "prefer warm blooded prey who they bite to death with their fangs". They can also disable opponents with blasts of sonar.

Azmyths are Chaotic Neutral, intelligent bats who form friendships with humanoids through telepathy. I generally find that sort of sidekick animal an unnecessary annoyance in a game, but hey, if that's what you like.

Night Hunters are named Dragazhar after an adventurer who domesticated one "long ago". I find that setting-specific stuff in the MM a bit odd; "long ago" where? Anyway, the Night Hunter is basically a more powerful Large bat, with velvet fur and red eyes.

Sinisters aren't really bats; they are more like levitating manta rays which fly around casting *Hold Monster* spells and annoying people. Although they are completely silent, they love music, and are attracted to bards, who they will follow from campsite to campsite to listen to his singing or playing. I'm trying to think of an adventure hook associated with that, but can't....

This is a bit of a low point in the MM. We have bats, bears and then beetles in a sort of real-life animal triple whammy. Luckily after that there are behirs and beholders to look forward to, so bear with me. ("Bear" with me? Geddit?)

demiurge1138

04-23-2008 12:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I like the sinisters, but never could figure out how to use one. The bard finds out that he's being followed and... then what?

Also, I don't believe in banshees, but there is an aurumvorax living down the street from me...

noisms

04-23-2008 01:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8773516)

I like the sinisters, but never could figure out how to use one. The bard finds out that he's being followed and... then what?

My thoughts exactly. It's *almost* an idea you could use, but not quite.

Nokura

04-23-2008 02:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8767385)

Basilisk

Finally, there is the Dracolisk... Its eyes have 'nictating membranes' which largely protect it from its own gaze; I don't know why they didn't just use that explanation for the Greater Basilisk too, rather than bring in this short-sighted nonsense.

I love it when game designers use these kind of terms because they sound cool or something similar. Here is the info on Wikipedia about nictitating membranes in nature.

Not seeing it help the dracolisk, unless he gets sand in his eye. :)

Cool thread though, makes me remember why I never bought AD&D 2 (played it quite a bit but it never felt that coherent really...now I know some of the reasons why). And all those save or suck effects = ouch.

Smartmonkey

04-23-2008 02:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8773516)

I like the sinisters, but never could figure out how to use one. The bard finds out that he's being followed and... then what?

Also, I don't believe in banshees, but there is an aurumvorax living down the street from me...

The party needs to intercept a messenger of the big evil overlord. Fortunately, he's a bard, so he shouldn't be hard to overcome up close. Unfortunately, he has a small flock of Sinisters following him around, all of whom will probably object rather strenuously to the PC's interrupting his performance.

I can also see them being used for creep/fantastic factor - the Bard is hanging around camp fiddling with his lute, when he notices a bunch of floating manta rays just... watching him. His reactions can lead all sorts of strange places...

A Letter From Prague

04-23-2008 02:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8773454)

Huge Bats also have the vaguely silly moniker "Mobat".

It's the evolved form of Nubat!

Nomad4life

04-23-2008 02:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I love this thread. Can't wait until we get to some of my favorites...

noisms

04-23-2008 03:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8773892)

The party needs to intercept a messenger of the big evil overlord. Fortunately, he's a bard, so he shouldn't be hard to overcome up close. Unfortunately, he has a small flock of Sinisters following him around, all of whom will probably object rather strenuously to the PC's interrupting his performance.

That isn't bad, actually. Yoinked!

JasonK

04-23-2008 04:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8773454)

Ordinary Bat. This speaks for itself, but did you remember that a flock (a flock? Is that right?) of bats can put out torches (1% chance per round per bat), reduce THACO by 2, and force you to perform a Wisdom check to be able to cast a spell? I've never had that effect in one of my games, but I will in the next one!

This is very cool, any useful to remember when we get further down the line to the Vampire entry. :)

Also, the interweb tells me that a grouping of bats is called either a Colony or a Camp. Make of that what you will.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8773892)

The party needs to intercept a messenger of the big evil overlord. Fortunately, he's a bard, so he shouldn't be hard to overcome up close. Unfortunately, he has a small flock of Sinisters following him around, all of whom will probably object rather strenuously to the PC's interrupting his performance.

Awesome!

~ jason

Biohazard

04-23-2008 07:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I was wondering if your version features the (IMHO) ugly coloured pictures, or is it still the moody b&w ones from the binders?

Because I still love the b&w ones. The Orcs, Hobgoblins also the Kobolds were quite nicely done. Ahhh, the memories ...

sim_james

04-23-2008 08:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8773454)

Sinisters aren't really bats; they are more like levitating manta rays which fly around casting Hold Monster spells and annoying people. Although they are completely silent, they love music, and are attracted to bards, who they will follow from campsite to campsite to listen to his singing or playing. I'm trying to think of an adventure hook associated with that, but can't....

I guess I would use a few sinisters if I wanted to depict a stretch of countryside as being a bit weird and... well, sinister.

"Hey, it's a map of Darkvania. Remember that place?"

"You mean the country with all the gypsy oracles, Spanish moss, and weird manta bats that kept showing up whenever Loran pulled out his harp? Yeah, I fucking remember it. I was never so glad to find myself in a wholesome halfling village than after we crossed the border out of there."

Wood

04-23-2008 08:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8773454)

Huge Bats also have the vaguely silly moniker "Mobat".

Mo Bat, Mo Problems.

noisms

04-23-2008 08:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Biohazard (Post 8774749)

I was wondering if your version features the (IMHO) ugly coloured pictures, or is it still the moody b&w ones from the binders?

Because I still love the b&w ones. The Orcs, Hobgoblins also the Kobolds were quite nicely done. Ahhh, the memories ...

The art ranges from the godawful (probably the 'ugly coloured pictures' you mention) to the carefully mediocre to the really quite good (DiTerlizzi's pictures). There are no B&W ones; I don't think they kept any art from the binders (although I could be wrong).

The Last Conformist

04-23-2008 09:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8760880)
Black Abisashi have a measly 4 hit-dice, with an average of 16 hit points. .

How does that work? D7s?

noisms

04-23-2008 09:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 8774787)
I guess I would use a few sinisters if I wanted to depict a stretch of countryside as being a bit weird and... well, sinister.

"Hey, it's a map of Darkvania. Remember that place?"

"You mean the country with all the gypsy oracles, Spanish moss, and weird manta bats that kept showing up whenever Loran pulled out his harp? Yeah, I fucking remember it. I was never so glad to find myself in a wholesome halfling village than after we crossed the border out of there."

Well, if a place is called Darkvania...don't expect picnics and daisies. ;)

Biohazard

04-23-2008 09:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8774825)
The art ranges from the godawful (probably the 'ugly coloured pictures' you mention) to the carefully mediocre to the really quite good (DiTerlizzi's pictures). There are no B&W ones; I don't think they kept any art from the binders (although I could be wrong).

Okay, I think I know which version it was. I was a bit unsure, because the German translation also featured the binder version as a hardcover.

Lugh

04-23-2008 11:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always wanted an *aurumvorax* as a familiar for my high-level wizard, but could never quite convince the DM to let me have it.

noisms

04-24-2008 01:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bear

Part two of our triple bill of ordinary animals, we have the Bears, which I have to confess I've only ever used once - a group of bandits the PCs in one of my campaigns had to fight kept a pet one who they fed prisoners to. There seems something slightly unrealistic (What? AD&D? Unrealistic? Never!) about solitary bears attacking a party of six armed and armoured adventurers on horseback. (To be fair to the designers, it actually says as much in the text description.)

Anyway, let's get on with it.

First up is the *Black Bear*, which like the other bears can grab you on a natural 18 or above to hit roll, and hug for additional damage. Why on earth didn't they keep such a simple and intuitive idea for 3.X? Doing the same trick in D&D 3.5 would take dice roll after dice roll of grappling and opposed checks and the use of Super Duper Improved I'm Gonna Get You feats... You know, the more I think about it, although AD&D was a crude mish-mash of rules and systems, it seemed to be a heck of a lot easier to run most of the time than 3.X. Although maybe that's just because I grew up with it.

Next are *Brown Bears* and *Cave Bears*, which are basically bigger and meaner varieties of the *Black Bear*, with the corollary that in a fight they can go berserk and keep on attacking until they reach -9hp. Cave Bears are also different from the norm in that they'll perfectly happily attack a party of adventurers. Well, you wouldn't want to get *too* realistic, right?

And finally there is the *Polar Bear*. Now, I'm sure most of the people reading this are more knowledgeable than me. (Or more inclined to look stuff up on wikipedia.) Are Polar Bears really **14' high** when they stand up? Because that's what it says in the MM.

If they are...bloody hell. If not... I suppose the MM Polar Bear is a sort of fantasy version of the real life creature; a Dire Polar Bear, if you will.

Tomorrow I'll inflict the Beetles of the AD&D world onto my readership. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

an_idol_mind

04-24-2008 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8775949)

*And finally there is the Polar Bear. Now, I'm sure most of the people reading this are more knowledgeable than me. (Or more inclined to look stuff up on wikipedia.) Are Polar Bears really **14' high** when they stand up? Because that's what it says in the MM.*

That actually sounds about right to me. My hometown museum has a stuffed polar bear on display. Standing on its hindquarters, the thing's head nearly reaches the second-floor balcony.

noisms

04-24-2008 01:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by an_idol_mind (Post 8775963)

That actually sounds about right to me. My hometown museum has a stuffed polar bear on display. Standing on its hindquarters, the thing's head nearly reaches the second-floor balcony.

Christ Almighty, that's big. They must get through a heck of a lot of seals.

DMH

04-24-2008 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The polar bear and cave bear stats were switched. This was official errata for the MC and then didn't fix it for the MM.

As for art, who did the goblin? It ia the worst piece other than the invisible stalker (check the credit page for who did that).

g026r

04-24-2008 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8776083)

It ia the worst piece other than the invisible stalker (check the credit page for who did that).

Hey, don't be dissing the invisible stalker illustration. :p

noisms

04-24-2008 01:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8776083)

The polar bear and cave bear stats were switched. This was official errata for the MC and then didn't fix it for the MM.

As for art, who did the goblin? It ia the worst piece other than the invisible stalker (check the credit page for who did that).

Aha, that explains a lot.

The goblin was probably Jeff Butler. It is truly awful. Although I stand by my belief that the absolute worst illustration is the Roper.

As for the Invisible Stalker....well, let's not ruin the (ahem) joke.

weasel fierce

04-24-2008 02:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ive used cave bears quite a bit. Always seems to scare my players.. along with tigers.

A big monster is one thing, but these are big animals that we know can inflict horrible damage on a human body. There's a certain kind of respect inflicted by that

demiurge1138

04-24-2008 02:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8776127)

The goblin was probably Jeff Butler. It is truly awful. Although I stand by my belief that the absolute worst illustration is the Roper.

If memory serves me right, that goblin is actually by Tony DiTerlizzi! It's a recycled (yet still terrible) illustration of a kobold from the super-module Dragon Mountain. There used to be a Gallery of Terrible Art on his website, and many Pirates of Penzance jokes were made.

You'll notice that the kobold in the Monstrous Manual is basically wearing the same outfit, but has a vastly superior picture.

blizack

04-24-2008 02:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8776291)

If memory serves me right, that goblin is actually by Tony DiTerlizzi! It's a recycled (yet still terrible) illustration of a kobold from the super-module Dragon Mountain. There used to be a Gallery of Terrible Art on his website, and many Pirates of Penzance jokes were made.

I never owned the Monstrous Manual, but the DiTerlizzi art in Dragon Mountain is, by and large, not very good (it was his first published work, I think). And his "Dragon Mountain Kobolds" are extremely goblin-looking.

Biohazard

04-24-2008 02:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 8776091)

Hey, don't be dissing the invisible stalker illustration. :p

That really had me cracking up, when I saw it the first time!

brotherscrim

04-24-2008 02:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 8774918)

How does that work? D7s?

hit dice were d8s, right?

the average roll on a d8 is 4.5

this we all know, now. The question is, did the designers know at the time of creation of the books that the average for a given die is $(dx+1)/2$, or did they, like i did for a long time, assume that the average for a given die is half its maximum?

anyone care to do a random sampling of the MM stats and see what they can see?

Wakboth

04-24-2008 03:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8776291)

If memory serves me right, that goblin is actually by Tony DiTerlizzi! It's a recycled (yet still terrible) illustration of a kobold from the super-module Dragon Mountain. There used to be a Gallery of Terrible Art on his website, and many Pirates of Penzance jokes were made.

I seem to recall that it was a sketchy design pic that somehow ended up being used as the final illustration.

Quote:

You'll notice that the kobold in the Monstrous Manual is basically wearing the same outfit, but has a vastly superior picture.

And the goblin in 3e MM is also based on the same critter... except vastly superior. :)

demiurge1138

04-24-2008 04:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

For those of you playing along at home without a Monstrous Compendium, this is the goblin we're talking about:

<http://mmadnd.chat.ru/goblin.gif>

It's a bad illustration, but I admit that it has a certain rough charm to it.

blizack

04-24-2008 04:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8776998)

For those of you playing along at home without a Monstrous Compendium, this is the goblin we're talking about:

<http://mmadnd.chat.ru/goblin.gif>

It's a bad illustration, but I admit that it has a certain rough charm to it.

Yep, that's the "Kobold, Dragon Mountain" illustration from the Dragon Mountain boxed set's Monstrous Compendium pamphlet.

DMH

04-24-2008 05:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

There is color outside the lines above its left shoulder and its arms are not the same length.

noisms

04-24-2008 09:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

So not only am I getting a thousand-and-one plot hooks from this thread, I'm also learning about the art design history of Dungeons and Dragons.

Actually when you look at the goblin pic, you can see a sort of DiTerlizzi-ish roughness about it - that slightly scrawled look that he would develop into something really great when he did the Planescape art. I suppose that goblin (or kobold, more accurately) was drawn in the putative stages...

And to think I was blaming Jeff Butler.

noisms

04-24-2008 10:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Beetle, Giant

Giant Beetles are pretty much what you would expect. Big Beetles. They are "basically unintelligent and always hungry"; they roam around aimlessly and when they come across something organic, they eat it. This includes brave adventurers, who can't be revived by anything other than a *wish* spell if they get eaten - the beetle's mandibles will crush them into a pulp.

There are six kinds identified:

Bombardier Beetle. As far as I know, this is a real insect, which can squirt nasty chemicals out of its rear end (so can I after a heavy night down at the pub...) to scare off predators. In game, this ability variously stuns, deafens, and causes 3d4 damage to its enemies in 8-15' radius. Pretty terrifying for a small party of 1st level adventurers, who could end up being TPK'd by such a threat if the dice go wrong. Talk about ignominy - TPK'd by a beetle's fart. If a Bombardier Beetle is killed, the chemicals can be removed and an incendiary device fashioned - which makes the animals popular with alchemists. Adventure hook with your beetle, sir?

Boring Beetle. And you are to read nothing untoward into this creature's name. Not at all. Anyway, it, er...has a nasty bite. Jolly nasty. It also raises fungi and....zzzzzzz..... (Okay, I'm being mean to the poor Boring Beetle. Actually there are some nice ideas alluded to in the text. A group of the insects can develop a sort of hive mind intelligence, and they collect magical items and grow fungi guards for their nests. That could be an interesting twist on a dungeon crawl.)

Fire Beetle. Now this really *is* a boring beetle. It has nothing to do with fire - it is so named because of red patches on its body which glow in the dark. Mages and alchemists are apparently keen to discover the secret of this luminescence. I wonder if any of them know any adventurers who could help out? I suppose they could advertise in, I dunno, a tavern or something...

Rhinoceros Beetle. This is a big bugger with a massive horn. Its shell is used to decorate Egyptian temples. Nothing to see here. Move along.

Stag Beetle. "Great nuisances" which raid farms to eat all the grain. I wonder if they could be brought into a combined Ankheg/Stag Beetle agricultural adventure fest.

Water Beetle. My uncle has a little "water ecology system" in his basement in which he is trying to perfectly emulate a typical British pond. Along with water boatmen, water scorpions, water spiders and sticklebacks, he also has a couple of these water beetles in there. They're surprisingly fast, and quite big. That's all I have to say about water beetles.

Thank God that's over. Behirs tomorrow. And after that a certain race of floating circular beasts with big eyes. I wonder what they could be...

demiurge1138

04-24-2008 01:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8778963)

Beetle, Giant

Stag Beetle. "Great nuisances" which raid farms to eat all the grain. I wonder if they could be brought into a combined Ankheg/Stag Beetle agricultural adventure fest.

The way I see it, the party is hired by a powerful merchant consortium. A huge swarm of giant stag beetles, their eggs transported to the food belts owned by these merchants either by malice or bad luck, are eating all the grain in sight. Without that grain, not only is there no bread for the peasants and princes alike, but the barley that would go to making beer for the dwarves, an important trade commodity with those surly folk. With no beer, the trade in fine dwarf-craft weapons would trickle out, and the dwarves might spitefully look the other way if raiding parties of hobgoblins or kobolds were to move through the outskirts of their territory to raid the merchants' lands...

So where do the adventurers come into this? After a few jobs just clearing out areas where the beetles are thick, the merchants realize that a more subtle approach needs to be taken to get all of the chittering menaces. Biological control. The party is then hired to delve into ankheg nests and steal enough eggs to introduce throughout the region; ankhegs are notorious predators of giant stag beetles, after all. But ankhegs in the region are nowhere to be seen. What sort of monster could be keeping the ankheg populations so small and eat their eggs...?

mirober

04-24-2008 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8747450)

Arcane

First off, it has to be said this is our first genuinely awful illustration. A blue chump with a big head, basically, which discourages me from using the very monster itself through its sheer... I-could-have-done-better-edness.

Pulls out book

Huh. To me, that illustration says "Hi there, I'm from the 80's. Would you care to do a lot of coke and vote for Ronald Reagan ... IN SPACE?" Still, that kinda fits, since the text itself puts them in the Spelljammer setting.

(I'm with you, though, I prefer the Planescape Arcane).

brianm

04-24-2008 02:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I used bears a lot, mostly as companions for druids and very high level rangers. Since I ran points-of-light campaigns before PoL was cool, dryads who lived in dangerous woods would also charm them to scare away anyone with an axe or an open flame who came too close to their trees.

- Brian

noisms

04-24-2008 03:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8779530)

The way I see it, the party is hired by a powerful merchant consortium. A huge swarm of giant stag beetles, their eggs transported to the food belts owned by these merchants either by malice or bad luck, are eating all the grain in sight. Without that grain, not only is there no bread for the peasants and princes alike, but the barley that would go to making beer for the dwarves, an important trade commodity with those surly folk. With no beer, the trade in fine dwarf-craft weapons would trickle out, and the dwarves might spitefully look the other way if raiding parties of hobgoblins or kobolds were to move through the outskirts of their territory to raid the merchants' lands...

So where do the adventurers come into this? After a few jobs just clearing out areas where the beetles are thick, the merchants realize that a more subtle approach needs to be taken to get all of the chittering menaces. Biological control. The party is then hired to delve into ankheg nests and steal enough eggs to introduce throughout the region ankhegs are notorious predators of giant stag beetles, after all. But ankhegs in the region are nowhere to be seen. What sort of monster could be keeping the ankheg populations so small and eat their eggs...?

You should write adventure modules.

noisms

04-24-2008 03:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8779781)

I used bears a lot, mostly as companions for druids and very high level rangers. Since I ran points-of-light campaigns before PoL was cool, dryads who lived in dangerous woods would also charm them to scare away anyone with an axe or an open flame who came too close to their trees.

- Brian

That makes sense, although I tend to use non-powerful animals as companions for those classes - birds are a favourite, or things like skunks and snakes. I don't like bears and wolves and the like, which really seem to take away the role of the party's melee-oriented PCs. It seems a bit much to have a druid who can not only cast support spells and do well in melee, but who *also* can call on a ravaging bear.

JasonK

04-24-2008 06:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Druids are a bit much in general, aren't they, though? A skunk as an animal companion would just be hilarious... :)

~ jason

noisms

04-24-2008 06:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8780261)

Druids are a bit much in general, aren't they, though? A skunk as an animal companion would just be hilarious... :)

~ jason

A player in my current game has a skunk. It isn't an animal companion - he's a cleric with animal handling and animal training proficiencies - but it does exist. We houseruled the spray so it sort of acts like a less powerful Stinking Cloud. It's actually got the players out of a number of scrapes, especially when they were at lower levels.

JasonK

04-24-2008 06:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Don't skunks get stats later on in the book? Or is it one of the other manuals/editions where that's the case?

~ jason

noisms

04-24-2008 10:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8780369)

Don't skunks get stats later on in the book? Or is it one of the other manuals/editions where that's the case?

~ jason

You're right, under 'Mammal'.

noisms

04-24-2008 11:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Behir

The poor man's dragon, a Behir is a sort of cross between a crocodile and a snake (if you can imagine a 40' long crocodile-snake with a dozen legs, blue skin and the ability to breathe lightning, that is). It can run about on 'all dozens', or it can fold its legs to its sides and slither on its belly like a snake. That reminds me of my friend, who has a pet iguana he sometimes lets swim around the swimming pool. It swims by folding in its legs like a snake and moving its body from side to side. Technically Behir don't do it while they're swimming, but that's how I imagine the movement.

Yeah, whatever, forget I mentioned that. Moving on...

Behir can mess you up good and proper. On a natural 20 they can swallow you whole, giving you six rounds to be rescued from death and only twelve rounds to be rescued from digestion and hence complete oblivion. Not even a *wish* spell will save you if that happens. (I doubt there's precedent for an animal being able to digest somebody in...what, a few minutes? But that lightning breath has to come from somewhere, I suppose.) Aside from that, they're just plain tough - lots of hit dice and attacks. A good, solid, high level straight-up-fight sort of monster, which has a nice old-school slaying-of-mighty-mythic-beasts, St. George-and-the-Dragon kind of feel to it. In fact, I'm going to go straight out and say the Behir is my favourite monster in the book so far. Although we're only about 3% of the way in.

I also like the picture. The featured Behir seems oddly pleased with himself, for some reason, with a faint smile that can only be described as smug. Perhaps he's just swallowed an adventurer.

Plot hooks aplenty towards the end of the blurb. In fact, I count 4:

1. Behir are useful to mages, because their body parts can be variously used for *lightning bolt*, *protection from poison* and *neutralise poison* spells.
2. Behir sometimes swallow prey whole, so in their bellies you can often find magical items of an indigestible nature. (I love how, in a standard AD&D campaign world, there are enough adventurers in existence to be eaten by Behir and then have their remains discovered by *another* adventurer. It's as if they're a not particularly common, but hardly rare profession - perhaps occurring with the frequency of, say, a Yoga instructor in the real world.)
3. Behir skin can be made into armour (yeah, that old chestnut...I think around 25% of the monsters encountered so far can have their skins or shells fashioned into armour of some kind; my next high level character is so going to have an Ankheg shield, Behir scale-mail and Boring-Beetle shell helmet). The suit will be worth at least 500gp, although

unfortunately it isn't started. Now there's the Supplement That Never Was: the Complete Guide to Monster-Corpse Armour....

4. Behir and dragons hate each other and will go out of their way to drive each other out of their territory; I'm already imagining a "rampaging Behir who's been driven into settled lands by a Red Dragon moving into his territory and supplanting him" campaign....

committed hero

04-25-2008 12:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Great thread.

One thing that has always bothered me about nictating membranes: apparently, membranes are the only things that nictate in the observable universe.

Mark Krawec

04-25-2008 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8781274)

...I think around 25% of the monsters encountered so far can have their skins or shells fashioned into armour of some kind; my next high level character is so going to have an Ankheg shield, Behir scale-mail and Boring-Beetle shell helmet). The suit will be worth at least 500gp, although unfortunately it isn't started. Now there's the Supplement That Never Was: the Complete Guide to Monster-Corpse Armour...

Makes you wonder if there isn't a subgroup of armorers who specialize in working chitin. Instead of forges, they use acids, glues & shellacs. Their apprentices don't stoke the bellows, they pump huge fans to keep the shop ventilated so the armorers aren't overcome by fumes.

noisms

04-25-2008 12:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mark Krawec (Post 8781487)

Makes you wonder if there isn't a subgroup of armorers who specialize in working chitin. Instead of forges, they use acids, glues & shellacs. Their apprentices don't stoke the bellows, they pump huge fans to keep the shop ventilated so the armorers aren't overcome by fumes.

It seems like every other post in this thread is an idea that I desperately want to incorporate into a campaign. That's such a good concept it would be wrong not to use it.

noisms

04-25-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by committed hero (Post 8781398)
Great thread.

One thing that has always bothered me about nictating membranes: apparently, membranes are the only things that nictate in the observable universe.

Glad you like it.

I agree with you: it has always bothered me too. Sometimes I can't sleep at night. ;)

6inTruder

04-25-2008 09:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mark Krawec (Post 8781487)
Makes you wonder if there isn't a subgroup of armorers who specialize in working chitin. Instead of forges, they use acids, glues & shellacs. Their apprentices don't stoke the bellows, they pump huge fans to keep the shop ventilated so the armorers aren't overcome by fumes.

Dude. That's awesome! I gotta remember it for when I finally get around to the Spelljammer game I want to run.

noisms

04-25-2008 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Beholders and Beholder Kin

The first truly iconic AD&D monster to appear; and I do really mean AD&D - Beholders don't seem to feature as much in later editions. Or is that just me?

The Beholder is billed as "the stuff of nightmares"; a big floating head, with one central eye like a cyclops, other smaller eyes on stalks, and a big mouth (or "maw" as it has it in the MM - don't you just love the word "maw"? It only seems to appear in RPG bestiaries, unfortunately). The eye stalks have different powers, such as *Sleep*, *Flesh to stone* and *Disintegrate*, and the main eye can blast *Anti-magic rays* in 90 degree arcs in front of it. These powers are available *at will*.

Behaviour-wise, Beholders are a bit like Nazis. Floating Nazis with eye stalks and maws. They despise all other races and believe themselves to be the ideal species, with all others fit only to be destroyed. (This is also reminiscent of the Daleks, if any fellow Brits are reading this. I'm not sure if the AD&D designers were fans of Dr. Who.) However, there is

a 50% chance that a Beholder will, on coming across a party of adventurers, choose to negotiate rather than "rain death" on them. (More strange exception-based design here - I guess for some reason Reaction Adjustment doesn't apply to a Beholder.)

Subspecies include:

The *Death Kiss* which, cheesy name notwithstanding, is an interesting variant that has bloodsucking tentacles rather than eyestalks - it uses ingested blood to heal itself and shoot bolts of electricity, and its tentacles can survive and continue to suck blood even if severed;

The *Eye of the Deep* which, as you might be able to guess, lives underwater, and blinds enemies with blasts of light from its main eye;

The *Gauth*, which is essentially a Beholder with something called the "dweomer drain" ability, through which it sucks power from magical items and renders them inoperable;

The *Spectator*, which guards treasure (for a 101 year period) and can travel between planes - unlike the other Beholders it is perfectly friendly so long as nobody tries to take the treasure it's guarding;

The *Undead Beholder* or "death tyrant" (there's a great over-the-top Lovecraftian description in the text, which I won't reproduce here because it's too long), a mindless zombie type, which evil mages, "Illithid villains" and other Beholders can control through...well, evil magic. *Charm* spells are no good - it has to be something special. (Something tells me that rule was introduced to prevent PC mages have a horde of pet Death Tyrants following them around.)

If you think that's all the MM has on Beholders, think again. More tomorrow.

Smartmonkey

04-25-2008 01:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

God, the section on Beholders is huuuuuuge. I never used the things (well, I implied they were around in my very short lived spelljammer game, but that doesn't count), because they have that sort of gonzo flavor my campaigns never grasped, but I think I might slip a death tyrant in some day...

noisms

04-25-2008 01:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8784991)

God, the section on Beholders is huuuuuuge. I never used the things (well, I implied they were around in my very short lived spelljammer game, but that doesn't count), because they have that sort of gonzo flavor my campaigns never grasped, but I think I might slip a death tyrant in some day...

I never used them all that much either, but one of the guys in my group used to use them ALL THE TIME when he was DMing. Grell were another favourite of his; I actually still get mixed up to this day between what Beholders can do and what Grell can, simply because of the number of encounters we had with them once we hit the middle levels.

Antithesis

04-25-2008 02:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8781274)

3. Behir skin can be made into armour (yeah, that old chestnut...I think around 25% of the monsters encountered so far can have their skins or shells fashioned into armour of some kind; my next high level character is so going to have an Ankheg shield, Behir scale-mail and Boring-Beetle shell helmet). The suit will be worth at least 500gp, although unfortunately it isn't statted. Now there's the Supplement That Never Was: the Complete Guide to Monster-Corpse Armour....

i would use the shit out of that supplement

Lugh

04-25-2008 09:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Heh. In one of my campaigns, I had a beholder city, with a dozen beholder variants as racial castes. It was wiped out because it happened to be the site for the return of an ancient evil god. The PCs had to wade through a "minefield" of zombie beholders arranged around the city.

I also remember having a discussion about beholders with a previous DM. He wanted to remove telekinesis from the beholder's bag of tricks, as it was too powerful (because there is no save). I pointed out that TK was actually the one eye you *had* to keep. Because, otherwise, how does the beholder pick up its food?

noisms

04-25-2008 09:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8786174)

I pointed out that TK was actually the one eye you had to keep. Because, otherwise, how does the beholder pick up its food?

We had the exact same conversation in my gaming group; it followed on from the 'How does a Beholder do after-toilet clean-up?' debate.

Mark Krawec

04-25-2008 11:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8784255)

Dude. That's awesome! I gotta remember it for when I finally get around to the Spelljammer game I want to run.

That would make for one freaky elf space marine platoon - they fly up in their moth ship, then hop out wearing suits of insect-shell armor.

noisms

04-25-2008 11:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mark Krawec (Post 8786542)

That would make for one freaky elf space marine platoon - they fly up in their moth ship, then hop out wearing suits of insect-shell armor.

That reminds me of the second novel in the *Viriconium* series, in a strange way. It's all about giant insects coming down to the world from the moon, after having been summoned from an alternate reality by the insane, confused visions of resurrected ancient aristocrats.

Or something. It's a while since I've read it.

FMP

04-26-2008 03:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Makes you wonder if there isn't a subgroup of armorers who specialize in working chitin. Instead of forges, they use acids, glues & shellacs.

That's actually how it works in Tekumel, the setting for *Empire of the Petal Throne*. One of the setting elements is that the world is metal-poor, so the best widely available material for weapons and armor is the hide of an animal called the Chlen which is also used as a draft animal.

MMDuran

04-26-2008 04:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This write-up takes me back to junior high and high school in all the right ways.

Subscribed. Keep up the awesome nostalgia. :)

Oskar Breytenbach

04-26-2008 09:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8784991)
God, the section on Beholders is huuuuuuge.

It certainly is. You just get through reading about six kinds of beholder, turn the page and discover another six! Madness!

They tend to look somewhere between 'startled' and 'terrified' in the pictures. It must be the big, wide eye.

noisms

04-26-2008 10:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by MMDuran (Post 8787815)
This write-up takes me back to junior high and high school in all the right ways.

Subscribed. Keep up the awesome nostalgia. :)

Thanks. That's the reason I'm doing it. Takes me back to all those lunch hours in Secondary School (British junior high school) we used to AD&D it up.

noisms

04-26-2008 11:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

So as other have alluded to, the MM doesn't have just three or four pages devoted to six kinds of Beholders and Beholder-Kin....it has *AT LEAST TWICE THAT!* So, if you like Beholders, read on. If you don't, skip this bit and wait for the next installment.

Beholders and Beholder-Kin Part II

Hive Mother: as you might expect, this is a big Beholder who has dozens of Beholder and Beholder-Kin minions, and can in fact create more. It "may be the ancestral stock of the better known beholder, the next step of its evolution, a magical mutation, or a separate species," according to the MM, but "the reality remains unknown." Dun dunnnnn....

Director: this one involves a beholder who clings onto the back of an insect, so it ends up like a kind of symbiotic centipede. The less said about this one the better, I think.

Examiner: a kind of refugee from an early Star Trek episode, this one is an eyeless floating sphere with spidery-leg bits

sticking out of it, which acts like a scribe or artificer.

Lensman: this is a five-limbed, vaguely humanoid cyclopsian freak; it has two arms, two legs, and a prehensile tentacle thing with which to... do tentacular things? This is the only Beholder-kin which can use weapons; it favours the polearm, so if you use it you get to equip it with a fauchard or guisarme or bec de corbin, if that is your wont.

Overseer: this is a kind of cross between a Beholder and a tree, covered in fungus which changes colour as the Overseer desires. Do you think, just possibly, they were running out of ideas for Beholder-Kin at this stage?

Watcher: a Beholder with three small eyes arranged around the main central one, and with just one long tentacle.

Have you had enough of Beholders yet? I have. Unfortunately, the ordeal is not yet over...

Other Beholders and Beholder-Kin

Beholder Mage: this beholder has purposefully blinded its main eye (!) in order to be able to cast spells like a mage. A vaguely interesting idea, but why the Beholder should feel this is worth the sacrifice isn't explained.

Elder Orb: an ancient Beholder of "godlike intelligence and power" which creates Death Tyrants.

Orbus: a white Beholder.

Doomsphere: a ghost-like Beholder created by "magical explosions". (If you read that and think, "What?", you're not alone.)

Kasharin: another undead beholder that passes on a rotting disease.

Astereater: "a great boulder-like Beholder without eyes".

Gorbel: a beholder with claws, which has the "nasty habit" of exploding when attacked. (!)

I have now lost the will to live. Birds next!

DMH

04-26-2008 08:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Abominations are the only versions of beholders I like. It was a bit later that I got into Spelljammer and found their origins there.

And the orbus is a bit more than a white beholder. They forgot to mention that orbuses are the power source for tyrant created spelljammers. One idea I had was to make them mutants created from normal beholders by wizards.

noisms

04-26-2008 08:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8790674)

Abominations are the only versions of beholders I like. It was a bit later that I got into Spelljammer and found their origins there.

And the orbus is a bit more than a white beholder. They forgot to mention that orbuses are the power source for tyrant created spelljammers. One idea I had was to make them mutants created from normal beholders by wizards.

I never really got into Spelljammer as much as I did some of the other settings, so I'm mostly ignorant about it. I like the hippopotamus guys, though.

DMH

04-26-2008 08:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

All the beholders on the third page are abominations- hive mothers and their spawn. I, Tyrant mentioned how mothers can make more castes but without any hard examples (IIRC it mentioned a web producing beholder meant to fight harpies).

Wakboth

04-26-2008 09:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Beholders are one of the few truly iconic D&D critters, and impressively bizarre ones at that. I've never used them much, but the idea of these superintelligent, xenophobic balls of hate is quite appealing.

IIRC, Eberron eventually explained them as living, magical artillery created by the daelkyr.

morgue

04-26-2008 09:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8784814)

Beholders and Beholder Kin

The first truly iconic AD&D monster to appear; and I do really mean AD&D - Beholders don't seem to feature as much in later editions. Or is that just me?

And there it is - after long discussion in this thread:

<http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=389888>

finally, the iconic 2E monster is revealed. It is, of course, the beholder. How come none of us picked it? Now that you mention it here, it seems obvious to me.

The beholder has been there since the start, but it was only in 2E that it reigned supreme as king of the badass monsters. And sure, it's iconic for 4E too, but I doubt it will be as central to 4E as the beholder was in 2E.

Wicked.

Pete Whalley

04-26-2008 10:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by morgue (Post 8790754)

The beholder has been there since the start, but it was only in 2E that it reigned supreme as king of the badass monsters. And sure, it's iconic for 4E too, but I doubt it will be as central to 4E as the beholder was in 2E.

I'm looking forward to scaring the shit out of my players in 4e with one, although I agree that it's heyday was in AD&D 2e.

Nothing quite so terrifying there as a volley of save or dies...I miss the good ol' days...*sniff*...I'll be over at Amazon trying to find replacements for my foolishly given away 2e books...*sob*

sim_james

04-26-2008 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Man, I loved beholders. There is a city in the Planescape setting that uses six beholders as its police force. Upon discovering this, my players became quite agitated and left immediately; after the game there was a bit of debate about the beasties.

Some of my players were quite adamant that beholders were "unkillable" - that literally nothing in the books could kill a beholder if it was being run intelligently. Despite the ludicrousness of this claim (what, a titan couldn't give it a go? The *tarrasque*?) they could not be swayed.

So I wrote a convention module for beholder PCs (and one mind flayer) and killed scads of them with liches, githyanki, and most memorably, a red dragon. There was about a 50% mortality rate.

AD&D 2nd edition Mind Flayers were quite brutal against beholders, especially if you gave them psionics. The illithid PC's saves and magic resistance ensured that almost every eyestalk fizzled; the beholders very quickly turned to using *telekinesis* to just hit the damn flayer with rocks. "Bugger this, I'm off to the Astral Plane," he said, and left.

Redfeild

04-27-2008 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cool thread.
A few comments.

Creatures like the Ankheg I don't think of as monsters. More like fantastical animals.

I remember the Monstrous Compendium. I can see why it did not catch on. The more pages I got for it, the harder it was to deal with.

Arcane were a big deal in Spelljammer. They were responsible for the building of most of the engines in Spelljammer.

Yes, Polar bears do get to be that tall.

The Hippo People are called the Giff. I did not like them at fist. Kind of goffy looking. But they grow on you.

6inTruder

04-27-2008 09:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8789599)
Orbus: a white Beholder.

Kasharin: another undead beholder that passes on a rotting disease.

Both are Spelljammer Beholders. The Orbus (as was already mentioned) is what normal Beholders use to power their ships.

The Kasharin are like wierd Beholder mummies. All I've read of them was in the Legend of Spelljammer box.

Quote:

Gorbel: a beholder with claws, which has the "nasty habit" of exploding when attacked. (!)

These were in the 1ed MM. I used to draw pictures of them all the damn time! Just SO astoundingly dumb.

noisms

04-27-2008 11:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Birds

Another marathon section here, and another real-life animal too. I think B is my least favourite letter of the alphabet when it comes to the MM. Although I do love me a good Behir of a morning.

Anyway, the description of the Bird sounds like it was written by the same person who did the Wolf - that is, a thirteen-year-old girl who may have been a PETA member. "Avians' unique physiology," it says, "sets them apart from all other life, and their grace and beauty have earned them a place of respect and adoration in the tales of many races." Gimme a break. Tell me how to kill them and take their stuff!*

*I'm kidding, obviously. Well, not really.

At least they didn't actually try to describe what a Bird *is*, like they did with the Bat. But without further ado, let's get into the nitty-gritty.

Blood Hawk: I've never used these, and don't even have memory of them being in the MM, which is odd because actually they sound like a good addition to a low level campaign as a semi-random encounter. The males attack humanoids in flocks, in order to steal jewelery with which to impress females. Blood Hawk females obviously aren't up on Destiny's Child. They don't buy their own diamonds, nor their own rings.

Boobrie: Yeah, he said boob. *chortle* The Boobrie is a 12' tall stork-like bird that eats catfish and snakes, and probably foolhardy adventurers too.

Condor: You know what this is already, I'd wager. What kind of bastard of an adventurer would kill a Condor though, eh? But already we've thrown ethics out of the window - Condor chicks fetch 30-60gp on the open market, you know.

Eagle and Giant Eagle: Eagles "never attack humanoids, but small creatures like brownies have to be wary of a hunting eagle." Now *there's* a way to balance out a game ruined by a brownie PC from the Complete Book of Humanoids and all its kewl powers. Giant Eagle eggs fetch a whopping 500-800gp. I don't think the 13-year-old PETA girl wrote this part of the entry....

Eblis: This is another stork-like thing with a level of intelligence that allows it to live in communities and have spellcasters. Most of the spells they can cast are of the elusive, annoying variety -*spook*, *wall of fog*, you know the type - and they use them to attack adventurers. They "delight [in] hunting and killing."

Falcon: These sell for 1,000 gps. Yep, it's fair to say that PETA girl *definitely* didn't get to see this part of the book.

Flightless Bird: A slightly amorphous entry, encompassing ostriches, emus and rheas.

Hawk: Hawks are mainly noted for their ability to make you blind; this is more likely than you might think. (25% chance on any succesful hit, with 10% chance of losing the eye.) Prices for eggs and fledglings are also noted. (500-1,200 gp.) I'm starting to envisage a massive egg-thief campaign here, progressing from birds of prey, to griffins and hypogriffs, to dragons, but don't think I'd ever be able to justify it. (The entire party would probably have to be Neutral Evil.)

Owl and Giant Owl: The eggs of the Giant Owl sell for 1,000 sp and hatchlings for 2,600 sp, apparently. So... 100gp and 260 gp then? Must be a misprint.

Talking Owl: This intelligent (and, needless to say, wise) owl will accompany Good adventurers on quests, provided such adventurers treat it kindly - it will feign a broken wing to see how the adventurers react. And yet it can also *detect good*, which makes you wonder what the point of the song-and-dance routine is.

Raven, Giant Raven and Huge Raven: I quite like Giant Ravens, and use them as mounts for races of evil diminutive humanoids. Weirdly, the Huge Raven is actually smaller than the Giant Raven. Seems like it should be the other way round.

Swan: There is a 10% chance that any Swan encounter will include a Swanmay, which seems ludicrously high. Then again...how often does an adventurer encounter Swans in a game? I'd guess it's generally only when the DM wants there to be a Swanmay, so I suppose the chance is in actuality close to 100%.

Vultures and Giant Vultures: The carrion feeders we know and love. These will eat anybody unconscious or magically *slept*, which is something I haven't used before but most certainly will in future. Giant Vulture eggs are worth 30-60 gps.

The 'B' section improves rather a lot from here onwards.

The Butcher

04-27-2008 01:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8781274)

Behir skin can be made into armour (yeah, that old chestnut...I think around 25% of the monsters encountered so far can have their skins or shells fashioned into armour of some kind; my next high level character is so going to have an Ankheg shield, Behir scale-mail and Boring-Beetle shell helmet). The suit will be worth at least 500gp, although

unfortunately it isn't stated. Now there's the Supplement That Never Was: the Complete Guide to Monster-Corpse Armour....

I, or rather the doughty human fighter whose byname inspired my forum login, was once the proud owner of a fine suit of behir hide armor.

This thread is TEH AWESOME!

J Harper

04-27-2008 05:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always liked the Eblis, when I first read about them in *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror* module, and the 1E MM II illustration gave them a suitibly sinister look. Never got the chance to use them, though - didn't really run all that much D&D back in that day.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

demiurge1138

04-27-2008 06:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 8793657)

I always liked the Eblis, when I first read about them in The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror module, and the 1E MM I illustration gave them a suitibly sinister look. Never got the chance to use them, though - didn't really run all that much D&D back in that day.

They're from Dungeonland? OK, that makes sense now. Makes them a bit more palatable.

Also, the intelligent owls do the song-and-dance with the broken wing because good does not necessarily equal nice. If the good-aligned adventurers don't pay it any heed, they're clearly not the sort to get its cryptic, mostly useless advice.

At least it's not a clockwork owl...

noisms

04-27-2008 07:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8793777)

They're from Dungeonland? OK, that makes sense now. Makes them a bit more palatable.

Also, the intelligent owls do the song-and-dance with the broken wing because good does not necessarily equal nice. If the good-aligned adventurers don't pay it any heed, they're clearly not the sort to get its cryptic, mostly useless advice.

At least it's not a clockwork owl...

When people mention clockwork owls I always think of *Viriconium*, although that had ospreys, not owls.

blizack

04-27-2008 10:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8792481)

These were in the 1ed MM. I used to draw pictures of them all the damn time! Just SO astoundingly dumb.

They were in the Fiend Folio, but yeah: totally ridiculous.

The Last Conformist

04-28-2008 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Is it just me, or is a Beholder without eyes a seriously weird idea? I mean, what's it beholding with?

Smartmonkey

04-28-2008 04:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 8794705)

Is it just me, or is a Beholder without eyes a seriously weird idea? I mean, what's it beholding with?

His awesometastic magickal mind-powerz, obviously.

I actually used a Booberie in a game once - the players wandered into a marsh, got lost looking for the dungeon, and decided they needed to kill something and eat it to survive. Rather than, y'know, going fishing, they went and got slapped around by a Booberie, manage to kill it (barely), and then realize, on their own, that no-one had brought flint nor tinder.

A Catoblepas TPK'd them later, and that was the end of my first open-endedish DnD game.

The Last Conformist

04-28-2008 06:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Blink

What sort of fishing doesn't involve killing something?

Julius Sleazer

04-28-2008 07:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 8795404)

Blink

What sort of fishing doesn't involve killing something?

Heard of catch-and-release?

A Letter From Prague

04-28-2008 08:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Julius Sleazer (Post 8795574)

Heard of catch-and-release?

Catch-nibble-and-release?

noisms

04-28-2008 01:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Brain Mole

Another psionic monster which I was puzzled by when I first started reading the MM. Even then, though, I thought it was a pretty cool idea (despite the rubbish picture). The Brain Mole is a psionic thief: it tunnels around underground waiting for a psionically able creature to come along - which it can detect with unerring accuracy within 200 yards - whereupon it attempts to suck their psionic energy and wipe their brain.

Nobles and royalty apparently like to keep pet Brain Moles to sense psionic intruders and protect from psionic attack. Lots of adventure hooks there. The ones that immediately leap to mind:

-The King's pet Brain Mole has been behaving as if it is sensing somebody with psionic ability in the royal palace, but nobody can figure out a) where or who it is and b) why whoever it is seems immune to the Brain Mole's psionic draining ability...

-The Duke of Dunderland is plagued by psionically gifted thieves, and wants a Brain Mole for protection...

-The people of Blahblahland hate and fear psionics and believe they are witches. Using Brain Moles, they try to ferret out people with psionic abilities and burn them at the stake...

The "capturing animals and selling them" shtick appears to have spilled over from the Bird entry; adult brain moles fetch 50gp on the open market, and young ones 5gp. That's as cheap as chips for a pet psionics-detector.

Smartmonkey

04-28-2008 06:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Oh god, the Brain Mole. The Monster Manual turned me off of ever getting into 2e psionics, as all of it was just too freaking weird.

And yeah, fishing involves killing, but not things that try to kill you back, generally. Well, unless the GM has been flipping through the K, W, or Z sections of the MM, anyways...

Ratoslov

04-28-2008 06:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8796808)

Brain Mole

Another psionic monster which I was puzzled by when I first started reading the MM. Even then, though, I thought it was a pretty cool idea (despite the rubbish picture). The Brain Mole is a psionic thief: it tunnels around underground waiting for a psionically able creature to come along - which it can detect with unerring accuracy within 200 yards - whereupon it attempts to suck their psionic energy and wipe their brain.

I always thought Brain Moles were bullshit; they're a naturally-occurring race of psionic landmines who will proceed to brain-attack psychics out of nowhere and who, even if you somehow alert the rest of your party to the problem, what are they going to do? There's a mole somewhere in a 200 yard radius ten feet underground. Good luck finding it.

EDIT: Now, Doll Golems are worse, creepy little assholes.

noisms

04-28-2008 09:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 8797449)

I always thought Brain Moles were bullshit; they're a naturally-occurring race of psionic landmines who will proceed to brain-attack psychics out of nowhere and who, even if you somehow alert the rest of your party to the problem, what are they going to do? There's a mole somewhere in a 200 yard radius ten feet underground. Good luck finding it.

EDIT: Now, Doll Golems are worse, creepy little assholes.

They're also way more powerful than the measly 35XP they're worth.

The Last Conformist

04-28-2008 09:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Julius Sleazer (Post 8795574)

Heard of catch-and-release?

Allow me to be more specific: what sort of fishing *that actually provides food* doesn't involve killing something?

6inTruder

04-29-2008 05:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8792637)

[size="5"]Blood Hawk: I've never used these, and don't even have memory of them being in the MM, which is odd because actually they sound like a good addition to a low level campaign as a semi-random encounter. The males attack humanoids in flocks, in order to steal jewelery with which to impress females. Blood Hawk females obviously aren't up on Destiny's Child. They don't buy their own diamonds, nor their own rings..

I think Blood Hawks came from the 1edFF? Or at least that's where I remember them from. Never had any real inclination to use them.

Smartmonkey

04-29-2008 09:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 8797815)

Allow me to be more specific: what sort of fishing that actually provides food doesn't involve killing something?

We all know that, in DnD, if you kill something, you get XP. No XP is awarded by fishing. Ergo, there is no killing in fishing.

;))

noisms

04-29-2008 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Broken One

The Broken One is a great fantasy concept - I wonder if it's where China Mieville got his idea for the 'remade' from? - and they've made great contributions to my campaigns in the past. While they're ostensibly "evil", they have a very good excuse for it, and so they bring in a whole new dimension of ethics and morality - they're not just another orc-alternative.

Broken Ones are the results of magical experiments gone wrong. The failed experiment has left them twisted and, er, broken, and usually infused with the essence of whatever animal the magic was supposed to have merged them with. So one merged with a vulture might have a beak, clawed feet and useless wings instead of arms. Shunned by human society, they gather together in loose tribal bands in the wilderness, where they scrape a living by ambushing travelers and merchants and plot their revenge on those who have wronged them.

One day I want to run a campaign where Broken Ones are the main 'foe'. The BBEG would be an evil mage who was careless one day with a polymorph spell and found himself permanently twisted into something half-human, half-something else. Now a Greater Broken One, he is marshalling together all the Broken Ones in the wilderness - and rumour has it he is creating more, by capturing innocent peasants and fusing them with animals through ancient magicks...

JasonK

04-29-2008 12:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8800649)

We all know that, in DnD, if you kill something, you get XP. No XP is awarded by fishing. Ergo, there is no killing in fishing.

;))

Is there also no crying in baseball?

~ jason

Smartmonkey

04-29-2008 03:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8801331)

Broken One

snip

I once wrote up notes for a Broken ones enclave living on the back of a Zaratan (which, for the ininitiated, you have a long wait ahead for some awesome), stolen almost wholesale from the Island of Doctor Moreau. Only the island was a giant zombie turtle, and Doctor Moreau was an Illithid.

I never got to use that one...

Matthew L. Martin

04-30-2008 05:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8801331)

Broken One

One day I want to run a campaign where Broken Ones are the main 'foe'. The BBEG would be an evil mage who was careless one day with a polymorph spell and found himself permanently twisted into something half-human, half-something else. Now a Greater Broken One, he is marshalling together all the Broken Ones in the wilderness - and rumour has it he is creating more, by capturing innocent peasants and fusing them with animals through ancient magicks...

If you don't have it, pick up the RAVENLOFT adventure *Neither Man Nor Beast*, which features a lot of broken ones and may provide you some material. It's an *Island of Dr. Moreau* homage, but a well-done one by Jeff Grubb. (Broken Ones came from the RAVENLOFT Monstrous Compendium Appendix I.)

(un)reason

04-30-2008 06:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Hmm. This makes me think of broken ones and mongrelmen, and how they would react to each other. Thematically, they occupy very similar ecological niches. Would they work together, or fight one another over those little differences, despite the rest of the world just thinking of them as a bunch of freaks.

noisms

04-30-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8805150)

Hmm. This makes me think of broken ones and mongrelmen, and how they would react to each other. Thematically, they occupy very similar ecological niches. Would they work together, or fight one another over those little differences, despite the rest of the world just thinking of them as a bunch of freaks.

I've given that one some thought in the past, too. I think Mongrelmen and Broken Ones have basically opposite attitudes - with the Mongrelmen being isolationist, and the Broken Ones wanting revenge. I think there would exist mutual respect/acknowledgement, but they wouldn't cooperate because of their different goals.

noisms

04-30-2008 12:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Brownie

Ah, the Brownie. The most annoying D&D monster ever? He must be up there. (You always know when a monster is going to be annoying when the descriptive text has lines like "Brownies use spells to harass and drive away enemies".) He will also be forever associated in my mind with the Brownies, which is the name of the girls' equivalent of the cub scouts association in Britain - I always imagine him with a yellow neckerchief and a woggle and a brown skirt. Not a nice image.

Anyway, a Brownie is the fairy equivalent of home help - a friendly night-time visitor who comes along and does some tidying up, milks the cows, keeps foxes out of the hen house... all in exchange for a bit of fruit and veg, and for not boasting to friends. It's all very bucolic - one of those strange moments where old fairy tales and myths break through all the pseudo-Tolkienism and force their way into D&D through the back door.

That said, I find it hard to imagine a Brownie ever appearing in one of my campaigns - partly because they're annoying, but mostly because...well, when are my players ever ordinary farmhouse owners? The only instance I could think of would be appearing as a guide (there's a flat 50% chance a Brownie will agree to this if asked - yet another point where the question has to be raised: why not either role play it out or base it on charisma?).

demiurge1138

04-30-2008 01:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Brownies = early girl scouts in America, too.

A brownie could make its way into a game in a couple of ways, as I see it. The party could be hired by an old friend or relation who is a farmer to find out what happened to his brownie who's gone missing. This poor brownie might have been kidnapped by a local villain who's too lazy to do his own housework and has the power to keep the brownie in line.

Alternatively, the famer could get his adventuring buddies to figure out why all his chores get done when he's not looking (as he thinks it's a peculiar haunting). Lighter fare than the usual D&D game; probably better as an aside than

as the focus of an adventure.

Wakboth

04-30-2008 02:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

One of the things I liked best in the 3e MM when I first read it was the blessed lack of these smug, pseudo-Irish fairies whose only purpose was to harass PCs. Nixies, pixies and grigs I can take, but keep the leprechauns and brownies and killmoulises away! :)

noisms

05-01-2008 12:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bugbear

The first genuine must-have monster in the book is the Bugbear, the classic "graduation" level creature that comes along after the goblins and orcs have become old hat. I have to confess that I've always loved the goblin-hobgoblin-bugbear axis (a veritable "Axis of Evil", if you will - to coin a phrase ;)) and actually prefer it to the orcs, ogres and ogrillons one. I hear that 4th edition is going to try to make those races completely unrelated and very different, which if true I think is a shame. It's good to have little brother, big brother, big daddy monster families, I think. The poor bugbears would be lonely otherwise, no?

Bugbears are a typical humanoid enemy, in that they roam around in bands doing evil things in an evil way, just waiting for a group of adventurers to stumble across and usually be killed by. As usual, stats are included for making leaders and champions of the clan (remember when this just consisted of giving such monsters more hit points and better THACO, rather than the laborious process of 'levelling them up'?). Bugbears are also into ambushes in a big way, which means they get surprise bonuses and have infravision.

Bugbears eat anything they can get their hands on, including goblins, which makes for great flavour (geddit?) for a campaign - the characters come over a rise in the forest and see a gang of bugbears in a clearing, with a cauldron bubbling away full of bits and pieces of goblins.... The last line of the description is, "Goblins are always on their toes when bugbears are present, for the weak or stupid quickly end up in the stewpot." Don't you just love that?

The other thing to be noted about the bugbear entry is the picture, which is a masterpiece, I think: a really evocative sketch of a big, bear-like goblinoid leaning on a mace - looking somehow proud and bestial at the same time. Great stuff.

JasonK

05-01-2008 06:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8811181)

The other thing to be noted about the bugbear entry is the picture, which is a masterpiece, I think: a really evocative sketch of a big, bear-like goblinoid leaning on a mace - looking somehow proud and bestial at the same time. Great stuff.

Given earlier discussion, it's worth noting that that picture is another Diterlizzi piece.

~ jason

noisms

05-01-2008 06:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8812098)

Given earlier discussion, it's worth noting that that picture is another Diterlizzi piece.

~ jason

Yeah, he has all the best pictures. Except, as has been established, the goblin masquerading as a kobold. (Or vice versa.)

DMH

05-01-2008 09:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8805150)

Hmm. This makes me think of broken ones and mongrelmen, and how they would react to each other. Thematically, they occupy very similar ecological niches. Would they work together, or fight one another over those little differences, despite the rest of the world just thinking of them as a bunch of freaks.

I think mongrelmen, being a people that have existed for awhile (as long as there has been interbreeding) would take in any broken ones they find. They would get even more nifty and weird genes and can show the broken ones how to survive. OTOH, broken ones might want nothing to do with mongrelmen, esp if they were humans converted to broken ones rather than initially animals.

noisms

05-02-2008 12:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bulette

Another iconic old favourite, the Bulette, or land-shark, has been with D&D since the very beginning. (According to the MM the name is pronounced 'Boo-lay', but clearly it should be pronounced 'Boo-lett' - the designers obviously weren't so up on their pseudo-French). A "cross between an armadillo and a snapping turtle" sums it up fairly well - except it also has a huge dorsal fin-like back which pokes out of the ground when it attacks, *a la* Jaws on a bee-line for some unsuspecting skinny-dippers.

Its temperament, "like the wolverine", is "stupid, mean and fearless", which sounds pretty slanderous to wolverines if you ask me. There's a wolverine who lives just down the street from me who's very urbane and sophisticated, and wouldn't dream of eating an adventurer. Anyway, stupid mean and fearless it is - a kind of underground mixture of shark and tank which roams around a 30 square mile area uprooting trees, starting landslides, and eating anything that moves. Once the whole area has been devastated, it moves on somewhere else. The only things it won't eat are elves, and it "doesn't like" dwarves. Very few people do. The beard sticks in the craw.

The Bulette is yet another monster-which-you-can-make-armour-out-of: plates of its skin can be made into shields of +1 to +3 value by dwarven smiths. This is the most obvious adventure hook, but I also like the vague rumour alluded to that soil which a Bulette has passed through becomes imbued with "magical stone dissolving properties". Now there's something a creative DM could pick up and run with, I feel.

Matthew L. Martin

05-02-2008 01:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8811181)

[size="5"]I hear that 4th edition is going to try to make those races completely unrelated and very different, which if true I think is a shame. It's good to have little brother, big brother, big daddy monster families, I think. The poor bugbears would be lonely otherwise, no?

I don't think you have to worry--there's a "goblin family lineup" sketch on p. 91 of *Worlds and Monsters*, and it's pretty clearly the classic trio. (The hobgoblin's a little iffy, but the goblin and bugbear are *definitely* the same creatures.)

They'll probably play a bit differently, but I think the world-based connections will remain.

Wakboth

05-02-2008 06:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bulettes and bugbears are both pretty iconic monsters that saw relatively little use in our games. Don't know why the bulettes never caught on, but with bugbears it was definitely because of the name, which is even wonkier in the Finnish translation (mörköpeikko). It was hard to take them seriously. :)

Also, and this is a bit tangential, but have you tried worlds without orcs at all, using just goblins, hobgoblins and bugbears? Goblins and hobgoblins especially would be pretty good fits for Tolkien's orcs; snaga and Uruk-hai.

noisms

05-02-2008 06:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8816987)

Bulettes and bugbears are both pretty iconic monsters that saw relatively little use in our games. Don't know why th

bulettes never caught on, but with bugbears it was definitely because of the name, which is even wonkier in the Finnish translation (mörköpeikko). It was hard to take them seriously. :)

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Actually a game I'm running at the moment is like that - hobgoblins rule the roost, with goblins beneath them as a worker caste and bugbears as a slave/warrior caste, and at the bottom of them all are the halflings and gnomes who are the untouchable caste. Orcs do exist, but they're just wild barbarians scraping a living in the mountains somewhere. The characters are all halflings and gnomes who have set up a kind of resistance movement against "The Man" (or "The Hobgoblin", I suppose).

Does mörköpeikko literally translate as "bug bear"? If so, that is a bit ridiculous. I imagine a bear with big multi-faceted eyes, six legs and wings.

brianm

05-02-2008 07:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I didn't use orcs for years, from about high school all the way through college. I always found them less interesting than the goblin family, though I included kobolds in that lineup.

- Brian

noisms

05-02-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8817034)

I didn't use orcs for years, from about high school all the way through college. I always found them less interesting than the goblin family, though I included kobolds in that lineup.

- Brian

Yeah, orcs are overdone. For the same reason I often don't use elves, or else try to use one of the weirder elf races - like aquatic or jungle ones.

I sometimes toy with the idea of basing orcs on a certain culture from the real world, but that opens up a huge can of worms ("What? So you're saying that all Greeks/Hungarians/Chinese/Indonesians are like orcs?!?") which is best avoided.

sim_james

05-02-2008 08:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8816987)

Also, and this is a bit tangential, but have you tried worlds without orcs at all, using just goblins, hobgoblins and bugbears?

That would be the Dragonlance setting, too. No orcs at all there.

Although somehow a half-orc managed to sneak into the Unsung Heroes supplement and another into one of the more horrid novels.

(un)reason

05-02-2008 08:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8816132)

Bulette

The only things it won't eat are elves, and it "doesn't like" dwarves. Very few people do. The beard sticks in the craw.

The Bulette is yet another monster-which-you-can-make-armour-out-of: plates of its skin can be made into shields of +1 to +3 value by dwarven smiths. This is the most obvious adventure hook, but I also like the vague rumour alluded to that soil which a Bulette has passed through becomes imbued with "magical stone dissolving properties". Now there's something a creative DM could pick up and run with, I feel.

Hmm. That makes me think of another plot idea. It doesn't eat elves, and given that they live in trees, its far less danger to their settlements and architecture. Plus it's good for the soil. What if the bullete was created by an elven wizard who wanted to get rid of those pesky humans and dwarves in the nearby region, so they can expand their territory without the devastation being traced back to them.

noisms

05-02-2008 08:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 8817153)

That would be the Dragonlance setting, too. No orcs at all there.

Although somehow a half-orc managed to sneak into the Unsung Heroes supplement and another into one of the more horrid novels.

Some of those non-Weiss & Hickman Dragonlance novels were awful, weren't they?

It does make you wonder why there have never really been half-hobgoblins or even half-bugbears, though.

noisms

05-02-2008 08:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8817179)

Hmm. That makes me think of another plot idea. It doesn't eat elves, and given that they live in trees, its far less danger to their settlements and architecture. Plus it's good for the soil. What if the bullete was created an elven wizard who wanted to get rid of those pesky humans and dwarves in the nearby region so they can expand their territory without the devastation being traced back to them.

That's quite a cool idea. It's also an interesting way to introduce "Elves as baddies" without resorting to Drow. I like it.

trippingsatyr

05-02-2008 09:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

As for worlds without orcs...

Give me calibans over orcs any day ^^

brianm

05-02-2008 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8817179)

Hmm. That makes me think of another plot idea. It doesn't eat elves, and given that they live in trees, its far less danger to their settlements and architecture. Plus it's good for the soil. What if the bullete was created an elven wizard who wanted to get rid of those pesky humans and dwarves in the nearby region so they can expand their territory without the devastation being traced back to them.

Oooo!

New tactic for Rhoubé Manslayer. :D

- Brian

Mark Krawec

05-03-2008 12:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8817005)

Does mörköpeikko literally translate as "bug bear"? If so, that is a bit ridiculous. I imagine a bear with big multi-faceted eyes, six legs and wings.

And that, in a nutshell, is where homemade monsters come from. And possibly some of those entries that showed up in White Dwarf back in the '80s.

Wakboth

05-03-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8817005)

Does mörköpeikko literally translate as "bug bear"? If so, that is a bit ridiculous. I imagine a bear with big multi-faceted eyes, six legs and wings.

Thankfully no. But "mörkö", although it has the same literal meaning as "bugbear" has a definite childish tone. Maybe bugbears as "bugaboos"?

noisms

05-03-2008 11:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bullywug

Now **here's** a monster you don't see as often as you used to. In fact, do Bullywugs even still exist in 3.X D&D? A "bipedal race of frog-like amphibians", they lurk in swamps, river deltas and marshland, ambushing the unwary as well as making a living by fishing and hunting - a sort of bufonidaean orc, if you will. (Yes, I have a ridiculously big dictionary and I'm not afraid to use it.) Living in small "socially fascist" (whatever that means) clan-groups, they inhabit an area long enough to exhaust all its resources, then move on somewhere else.

I suppose there isn't really much point to Bullywugs, in the grand scheme of things. They're weaker and less interesting than most of the humanoid species in the MM. Equivalent in strength to a goblin, their only real special ability is the hop attack (+1 to attack rolls) which they can deploy from ambush, and they can't use magic. Really their only value is as a kind of surprise: "Wow, our DM used *Bullywugs* on us at the game yesterday. Never had that happen before."

Part of my lack of enthusiasm I suspect stems from the genuine cringeworthy awfulness of the picture, which I wish I could replicate here. Something more moody and genuinely amphibian-looking (rather than just an orc with a frog's head) would have worked much better. Other than that, I suppose it's just hard to see a niche for the Bullywug when there are so many more "swamp-inhabitant" archetypes to use in the MM, from Lizardmen to Tasloi to Yuan-ti to

Grippli to Troglodytes. I suppose if I was going to use them I'd play up the swamp-hunter angle, giving them poison darts, net-traps...maybe giant toad allies.

I bet somebody is going to come along now and tell me that they always used Bullywugs and once had a campaign where the players explored a jungle which was once the site of an ancient empire of Advanced Bullywugs, sort of like the Maya in the Yucatan...

morgue

05-03-2008 11:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Bullywugs were heavily featured in the Isle-of-Dread related Adventure Path in the final run of Dungeon magazine. One of the adventures was even called "The Bullywug Gambit".

:-)

blizack

05-03-2008 11:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8820606)

Bullywug

*Now **here's** a monster you don't see as often as you used to. In fact, do Bullywugs even still exist in 3.X D&D? A "bipedal race of frog-like amphibians", they lurk in swamps, river deltas and marshland, ambushing the unwary as well as making a living by fishing and hunting - a sort of bufonidaean orc, if you will.*

Bullywugs were in the *Monsters of Faerun* supplement for 3rd edition. Oh, and surely bullywugs are more batrachidaean than bufonidaean, right? :D

I always had a soft spot for bullywugs, as they played a prominent part in the D&D cartoon. I even had some bullywug action figures as a kid.

Rachel Cartacos

05-03-2008 12:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8811181)

It's good to have little brother, big brother, big daddy monster families, I think.

I always take this even further and make them just different stages in the same species life cycle.

Goblins are the children, they grow into Hobgoblins, after a few decades they lose their fertility and grow into bugbears.

mirober

05-03-2008 01:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8820606)
In fact, do Bullywugs even still exist in 3.X D&D?

Pathfinder created an equivalent: The Boggard
http://paizo.com/download/pathfinder...1_Bestiary.zip

E.T.Smith

05-03-2008 02:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8820606)
Part of my lack of enthusiasm [for Bullywugs] I suspect stems from the genuine cringeworthy awfulness of the picture, which I wish I could replicate here.

Is *this* what you're talking about?

<http://neo3555.tripod.com/sitebuilde...s/bullywug.jpg>

It could be much worse:

<http://www.toyarchive.com/STAForsale...wugSpear1a.jpg>

That's the figure from the early 1980's D&D kids toylines, based on the Saturday morning cartoon in which Bullywugs were a recurring menace. As often as not, an episode would begin with the lost kids running and shouting "oh no, Venger's bullywugs have found us again!" then they'd execute some clever ruse to give 'em the slip. Because bullywugs featured so prominently in the show (but none of the other humanoids did), kids like myself who only found out about D&D *the game* after watching D&D *the cartoon* had an inflated expectation of their importance.

E.T.Smith

05-03-2008 02:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

While I'm posting pictures, I'll refer back to the **Bulette**. Because I love gleefully pointing out that some of its weirdness is because it was one of the monsters Gygax made up based upon some cheap plastic toys he used as improvised minis

back in the primordial days:

Source: It came from Blogspace

http://www.stupidranger.com/pics/mon...s/DSC_0674.jpg

demiurge1138

05-03-2008 02:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

In my prehistoric, reptiles-only campaign setting, bullywugs featured pretty strongly.

As a backwards race of jokes.

The Salt was a great shallow sea in between the two major continents, studded with thousands of marshy, mangrove-filled islands. It was inhabited by the bullywugs and the sivs, a race of monastic batrachians. The bullywugs thought that the two races were at war, and endlessly plotted to destroy their more civilized kin. The sivs knew that they had won the war ages ago, and mostly ignored the bullywugs, occasionally manipulating them into destroying their "allies" or hunting them for sport.

noisms

05-04-2008 10:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8821088)

*While I'm posting pictures, I'll refer back to the **Bulette**. Because I love gleefully pointing out that some of its weirdness is because it was one of the monsters Gygax made up based upon some cheap plastic toys he used as improvised minis back in the primordial days:*

Source: It came from Blogspace

http://www.stupidranger.com/pics/mon...s/DSC_0674.jpg

That's the coolest bit of trivia ever.

I wonder what the origin of that plastic toy was.

blizack

05-04-2008 10:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8823864)

That's the coolest bit of trivia ever.

I wonder what the origin of that plastic toy was.

Not sure, but I had a bag of cheap plastic dinosaur toys as a kid that included a bullette and a rust monster.

noisms

05-04-2008 10:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by blizack (Post 8823896)

Not sure, but I had a bag of cheap plastic dinosaur toys as a kid that included a bullette and a rust monster.

I have a feeling I had the rust monster, or at least I vaguely remember it, but it's the first time I've seen the Bulette. I'd love to know what company made them. Probably somewhere in Taiwan - they made all the cheap toys back then.

brianm

05-04-2008 11:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by blizack (Post 8820632)

I always had a soft spot for bullywugs, as they played a prominent part in the D&D cartoon. I even had some bullywug action figures as a kid.

Yeah, the cartoon went very far in selling the bullywugs to me, but it wasn't until recently that I think I ever got around to using any in an adventure, and even then they were sort of morally ambiguous allies for the PCs.

But man I loved those cool D&D action figures. :D

- Brian

brianm

05-04-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Yeah, I had at least two rust monsters, one that came with a bag of otherwise very authentic dinosaurs and saber-toothed tigers. I was shocked to see it appear in D&D.

And the bullywugs were not the only humanoids to show up frequently in the D&D cartoon, though they did appear alot. Some episodes also featured the pig-snouted orcs.

- Brian

Julius Sleazer

05-04-2008 11:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by A Letter From Prague (Post 8795677)
Catch-nibble-and-release?

Um, yeah. Good point.:o

noisms

05-04-2008 11:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Yes, here it is folks, the one you've all been waiting for, the Monster That Comes Before All Other Monsters (if not alphabetically), the Most Iconic of Icons, the most Dungeonest of D&D creatures (if not the Dragonest)....

the Carrion Crawler!!!!

Those wonderful words just trip of the tongue, don't they? Carrion crawler. Say it with me. *Carrion crawler*. It's like a little melody. And it brings back such warm memories because for me (and I suspect for many people reading this) it was the first monster I ever encountered as a D&D player.

For me, it happened when I was about 11 and my friend's brother ran a short adventure during the lunch hour at school using, I think, the red box set. My character was a nameless halfling, who I remember little about except that he had a dexterity of 16, which I thought was the coolest of cool things; the memory of rolling those three d6s and having it come up with two 6s and a 4....I think I was hooked on D&D from that moment. I also recall that he was wielding a handaxe, although my memory gets hazy after that. I picked a halfling because I'd just finished reading *The Two Towers*; I do remember that, at least.

It was a classic (in many ways The Classic) D&D adventure: without backstory or any explanation other than "You're adventurers and that's what you do," we entered a dungeon (I think the other players were a dwarf and a human magic-user) and in the first cavern came across this beastie....whereupon we commenced to kill it, and would have taken its stuff too if it had had any. (One of the other characters died in the encounter, I think, and came back as yet another dwarf with only a slight variance in stats.) My halfling struck the killing blow, as I recall, although maybe that's just a glory-stealing mis-memory.

[The next encounter was a red dragon. My friend's big brother was mean.]

Anyway, I'd be amazed if anyone reading this didn't know what a Carrion Crawler was, but for the uninitiated, it's a kind of giant maggoty worm thing that crawls around trying to paralyze people. It's an easy kill for its 420 XP, with a fair few hit dice but nothing to frighten you with other than 2d6 turns of paralysis; I have, however, always longed to see a TPK where a group of Carrion Crawlers get lucky, paralyzes the entire party, and proceeds to slowly devour them.

Or, even better, they paralyze the party and the DM says "You feel the Carrion Crawlers moving over you, but are temporarily blinded by their paralyzing poison," and what the creatures are actually doing is laying eggs inside the PCs' bodies, ready to hatch and explode from their stomachs, *a la* Alien. That would be fantastic.

The Ecology section at the end lets us know, though, that the Carrion Crawler ain't really bad - he's just misunderstood. He's good for the ecosystem, see, and fulfills the vital function of killing off the weak and foolish, thus strengthening the gene pool of his prey races. Eugenics in D&D, eh? Who would have thunk it?

sim_james

05-04-2008 04:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I remember the carrion crawler fondly from those 1st edition Monster Manual cards. Remember them? Full colour illo of a monster on one side and MM stats on the other...

I think I still have sets I and III around here somewhere.

Smartmonkey

05-04-2008 04:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Vs level 3ish party.

Begin with 6-10 orcs, with war leader and maybe a wolf or two for spice.

Add tamed Carrion crawlers among the orcish defenders.

Bake pie.

Utilize paralysis until hilarity ensues.

The carrion crawler does very poorly as a single critter. Team it up with a rust monster for extra hilarity/annoyance.

demiurge1138

05-04-2008 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I love love love the Monstrous Manual carrion crawler art. Look at it:

http://www.vanhiel.com/daniel/MC_ima...on_crawler.jpg

It's like a little jaunt into my subconscious. Maggot + octopus = love.

Despite that, I don't think I've ever used the monster itself. Which is a pity. I should really rectify that soon. Very soon...

tobygrandjean

05-04-2008 06:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

raises hand

Yup, I've been in TPKs with a carrion crawler. Just a run a hugely bad luck unduplicated until the TPK with a 3rd level party to a single ghoul in a pool.

There seems to be this rule; you better take at least one elf in the party or you'll be hosed by paralysis.

Wakboth

05-04-2008 09:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Carrion crawler's a menace at low levels; a bit of bad luck with the saves, and your party is suddenly down and worm chow.

noisms

05-05-2008 12:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8825516)

Carrion crawler's a menace at low levels; a bit of bad luck with the saves, and your party is suddenly down and worm chow.

2nd edition was really interesting that way. In earlier editions death had been swift and you just shrugged your shoulders and rolled up a new character. In 3.X, character creation took bloody ages so character death was a minor catastrophe. 2nd edition was caught between the two; on the one hand death was still sudden and often based entirely on luck, while on the other character creation was a much more involved affair than it had been in the past, and you were encouraged to invest in the process somewhat. It made for an odd mixture of being somewhat emotionally attached to characters while at the same time seeing them die a whole lot.

JRM

05-05-2008 06:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Thanks for this thread, the 2nd edition is my favourite version of The Monster Manual. I've always liked the additional ecology info.

As for the carrion crawler, I think of them as a relatively harmless monster - in early enough editions of AD&D they didn't have a bite attack, so there was no way they could inflict HP of damage. Just as well, since those paralyzing tentacles were a pain - with eight attacks a round at least one PC always ended up failing a save, and with a 15" move few characters would be able to outrun them.

A grell makes a far more threatening paralyzing monster, those things are *nasty*.

Smartmonkey

05-05-2008 10:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

It might be an interesting low-level adventure to have PC's hired by a local physician who has found that carrion crawlers make great anesthesiologists - i.e, capture a live carrion crawler so the doctor can use it to paralyze patients prior to surgery/amputations.

Creepy, but neat.

Numanoid

05-05-2008 11:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

There seem to be a bunch of monsters worth 420 XP.

I'm sure you could set up a very elaborate 2nd ed. "drinking game" where you take a bong hit every time you kill a monster.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cat, Great

Thankfully, PETA girl didn't get her hands on this entry, so it isn't an overblown weirdo love-in like a lot of the other "real" animal entries. The intro consists of one sentence and one sentence alone: "The great cats are among the most efficient of all predators." Yep, I guess so. Although you do have to wonder if this would be true in an average D&D homeworld where blue dragons and rocs and harpies are also on the prowl.

Anyway, detailed are:

Cheetahs, which can spring forward 20 feet, according to the MM. Is that right? 20 feet? There must be a zoologist reading this.

Jaguars, "one of the most feared predators of the jungle."

Leopards, which can spring forward 25 feet, and so always presumably beat cheetahs in long jump competitions at the big cat olympics. (Unless the cheetahs cheat, that is! God, I'm such a wit.)

Lions, which can actually leap 30 feet. They would beat the leopards at the big cat olympics, but they're usually too busy lazing around.

Mountain Lions, who are good competition for the cheetahs, with a 20 foot leap.

Spotted Lions, who don't leap at all.

Giant Lynx, who can only manage a pathetic 15 feet.

Tigers, who can manage a 30-50 foot leap, and so always get the gold medal.

Smilodons, who aren't really cats, but are included anyway because, well, hey.

Not much else to say about the big cats. Each entry makes a point of saying, at the end, that human beings are the cats' worst enemies and all of them become threatened by the destruction of their habitats and hunting by man; maybe I spoke too soon about PETA-girl.

I've never used a big cat as a monster in a game. It just doesn't seem to make sense; why on earth would a tiger want to take on four to six humanoids armed with swords and axes when it could just eat a deer instead?

Allandaros

05-05-2008 03:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8816987)

Also, and this is a bit tangential, but have you tried worlds without orcs at all, using just goblins, hobgoblins and bugbears? Goblins and hobgoblins especially would be pretty good fits for Tolkien's orcs; snaga and Uruk-hai.

I was already planning on doing this in my upcoming PbP. :D

JasonK

05-05-2008 03:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, rangers and druids still got animal companions in 2E, right? Maybe that's why cats were included...?

~ jason

demiurge1138

05-05-2008 05:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Animal companions are where I've usually used big cats. In the game I'm currently running, the party wizard stood in the back and got dragged off by a cougar animal companion. The rest of the party saved him at -9 hp.

That group still refers to getting ambushed as "being cougared".

Sleeper

05-05-2008 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8828260)

Smilodons, who aren't really cats, but are included anyway because, well, hey.

Minor correction. The *Smilodon* genus is part of the family Felidae, so by definition they *are* cats, and thus "saber-toothed cat" is fine. Sabre-toothed *tiger* on the other hand is taxonomically inaccurate because they aren't closely related to tigers (they belong to a different subfamily, Machairodontinae).

noisms

05-05-2008 09:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 8828533)

Minor correction. The Smilodon genus is part of the family Felidae, so by definition they are cats, and thus "saber-toothed cat" is fine. Sabre-toothed tiger on the other hand is taxonomically inaccurate because they aren't closely related to tigers (they belong to a different subfamily, Machairodontinae).

Blame the authors of the MM! I was just repeating the information I read there, parrot-like.

brianm

05-06-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Also, if you had 5k gp burning a hole through your Belt Pouch, Large, you could buy a hunting cat according to the equipment list of the 2e PHB.

I love the 2e PHB equipment list. It had damn near anything on it.

I also loved large, predatory cats because you couldn't have a sexy, voluptuous Frazetta-style babe lounging in the jungle without a half-dozen panthers or smilodons hanging about. :D

- Brian

noisms

05-06-2008 11:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8830070)

I also loved large, predatory cats because you couldn't have a sexy, voluptuous Frazetta-style babe lounging in the jungle without a half-dozen panthers or smilodons hanging about. :D

Very true! That reminds me of the Animal Lords in the Planescape Monstrous Compendium II; the Cat Lord (Mistress?) picture was bloody gorgeous.

Smartmonkey

05-06-2008 11:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That evil druid, y'know, the one whose idea of balance is closer to nature red in tooth and claw than anything else? Yeah. Gather up some smilodons, and start cacking those mean old farmers and townsfolk.

Seriously. I don't think theres much more terrifying than being hunted by a great cat - even lynx can be pretty damn scary. If you're a pissed of druid, great cats would make great terror assets.

noisms

05-06-2008 11:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cat, Small

Commoners be afraid, be very afraid. Oh, wrong edition, sorry.

Lots of interesting information in the Small Cat entry - get this: *some cats are pets, while others are wild*. Not only that, they are *commonly used to control rodent populations* and are *common in settled regions*! I know, I can hardly stand the excitement myself.

There are three types detailed in this entry; the Domestic Cat, the Wild Cat and the elven cat. The Domestic and Wild varieties are pretty much what you would expect; a few details on how cats are stealthy and rarely surprised, and the obligatory Ecology section on gestation periods and litter sizes.

The Elven Cat gets a slightly lengthier section; they are to the Domestic Cat what elves are to humans - in other words a more graceful, wise, annoying version with pointier ears. They have their own language (which must be the least-chosen language ever on character sheets: "My character can speak Common, Dwarven, Draconic and Elven Cat!"), rudimentary ESP, and a few spells like *Trip and Enlarge*. They also have a **99.9%** chance to move silently, which is a rule I guarantee I will never use; I mean come on guys, when it gets to 1d1000s, let's just call it quits and say they always move silently.

Rachel Cartacos

05-06-2008 12:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8832733)

*The Elven Cat gets a slightly lengthier section; they are to the Domestic Cat what elves are to humans - in other words a more graceful, wise, annoying version with pointier ears. They have their own language (which must be the least-chosen language ever on character sheets: "My character can speak Common, Dwarven, Draconic and Elven Cat!"), rudimentary ESP, and a few spells like Trip and Enlarge. They also have a **99.9%** chance to move silently, which is a rule I guarantee I will never use; I mean come on guys, when it gets to 1d1000s, let's just call it quits and say they always move silently.*

Haha! This is the first I've ever heard of these!

These are joining the Flumphs and the Wolf-in-sheep's-clothing as some of the coolest monsters ever!

sim_james

05-06-2008 02:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8832733)

*They also have a **99.9%** chance to move silently, which is a rule I guarantee I will never use; I mean come on guys, when it gets to 1d1000s, let's just call it quits and say they always move silently.*

But that's *unrealistic!*

kelvingreen

05-06-2008 05:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8832733)

(which must be the least-chosen language ever on character sheets: "My character can speak Common, Dwarven, Draconic and Elven Cat!")

Brilliant! The campaign possibilities abound!

Although that said, I could see the potential in some kind of Lovecraftian "the cats are in charge" adventure.

blizack

05-06-2008 10:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rachel Cartacos (Post 8832878)

Haha! This is the first I've ever heard of these!

These are joining the Flumphs and the Wolf-in-sheep's-clothing as some of the coolest monsters ever!

Well, the 1st edition Monster Manual II had the Cooshee (elven dog), so I guess it was only a matter of time.

Numanoid

05-07-2008 12:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Aww... kitties!

This whole thread is such a nostalgia trip for me.

Steve H

05-07-2008 08:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Always loved the *Monstrous Manual*, precisely for all of the ecology stuff. When I cleared out all my 2nd Ed stuff a few years back it was one of the few books I kept. Reading this thread is making me regret getting rid of the 2nd Ed stuff - really shows up how in many ways it was a very different game to 3e.

demiurge1138

05-07-2008 08:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

On ENWorld, one of the guys who used to write Ecology articles for Dragon Magazine posted his "Ecology of the Elven Cat" which didn't get picked up. You can read it [here](#). Makes them make a certain amount of sense.

Plus, it's a good read.

noisms

05-07-2008 12:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Steve H (Post 8837073)

Always loved the Monstrous Manual, precisely for all of the ecology stuff. When I cleared out all my 2nd Ed stuff a few years back it was one of the few books I kept. Reading this thread is making me regret getting rid of the 2nd Ed stuff - really shows up how in many ways it was a very different game to 3e.

A very different game, which all things considered I really prefer.

noisms

05-07-2008 12:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Catoblepas

I love the description of the Catoblepas: "The body of the catoblepas is like that of a large, bloated buffalo, and its legs are stumpy, like those of a pygmy elephant or a hippopotamus. Its long, snakey tail is swift and strong, and can move with blinding speed. The head of the catoblepas is perched upon a long, weak neck, and would be much like that of a warthog **except that the catoblepas is uglier.**" Talk about kicking somebody when they're down. Surely the Catoblepas already knows he's ugly without comparing him unfavourably to a warthog. I mean, he has a body like a large bloated buffalo, for God's sake!

Anyway, not only is he uglier than a warthog, the Catoblepas also has easily one of the worst pictures in the MM; one that has to challenge for the top 5. If you've never seen it, I really do urge you to check it out. It literally looks like it was drawn by the 9-year-old daughter of whoever wrote the descriptive text. (I imagine all the other designers crowding around him in the office and saying "Please, Bob, just please don't put that picture in! Tony Diterlizzi's just waiting in the next room for the go ahead!" But no, his little princess drew the picture and that's the one he wants to go for. If the rest of the world can't see what a talented artist she is, screw them!)

The Catoblepas is hands down the cheapest monster in the book. It's an insta-kill monster, of which there are quite a few in the MM; the difference is that a Catoblepas' gaze *doesn't even allow a saving throw*. If your eyes meet its gaze, you're fucked. What is more, if the creature has the advantage of surprise, *there is a straight 1 in 6 chance of somebody in the party meeting its gaze*. So a flat 1 in 6 chance of somebody being dead, basically, whenever the creature is encountered. Even if a concerted effort is made to close or avert your eyes, all you get is a saving throw against death magic. Not incidentally, the beast can also stun you with its tail with 75% effectiveness for 1-10 rounds. **And all this for only 975 XP!**

That said, it's mythological, so I quite like it. It reminds me of those old animated films by Ray Harryhausen (sp?), although I'm not sure a Catoblepas ever appeared in one of them.

Pointless Ecology information: Catoblepas' mate for life, live for 150-200 years, and attach no importance to treasure.

demiurge1138

05-07-2008 01:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Sadly, a catoblepas never made it into a Harryhausen movie. It would have felt at home there. And say what you will about 3e, but at least their catoblepas has a save attached to its death ray eyes.

Jack of None

05-07-2008 01:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I remember reading about the Catoblebas in some book as a child, but the only thing I remember about this early encounter with the Catoblebas is that it had a deadly gaze, but its hair was so heavy that it couldn't lift its head. I also remember it being described as very sad and lonely, although I might be confusing it with something else.

I would probably use the Catoblebas as an extremely unusual social encounter -- like an oracular monster or something -- rather than a combat scene.

Steve H

05-07-2008 05:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8837679)
A very different game, which all things considered I really prefer.

I'm torn. I think I'd have to play it again to really have an opinion on the matter, since it's been so many years now that I did.

What drew me to see 3e as an "upgrade" at the time was the more sensible and coherent internal structure of the rules, as opposed to 2nd Ed's somewhat random assortment of different rules subsystems (although playing 3e again now is highlighting that there's still a few random subsystems hiding in there, such as grappling). In hindsight though I'm starting to feel that 3e is a more rules-heavy game, to a degree which is starting to not pay off for me. My gut feel (but I say again, I've not played 2nd Ed in nearly 10 years) is that combat is far slower in 3e, which is something which bugs me.

kelvingreen

05-07-2008 05:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8837757)
Pointless Ecology information: Catoblepas' mate for life, live for 150-200 years, and attach no importance to treasure.

There's a supplement for, I think, 2e Forgotten Realms, which is an illustrated catalogue of strange items that can be bought from this travelling bazaar thing. One of the items is cheese made from the milk of the Catoblepas; for obvious reasons, procuring the milk is a dangerous job, so the cheese is something of a delicacy.

It's called "Death Cheese", and with a brilliant name like that, it endeared itself to our gaming group immediately.

Wakboth

05-07-2008 05:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8838489)

There's a supplement for, I think, 2e Forgotten Realms, which is an illustrated catalogue of strange items that can be bought from this travelling bazaar thing. One of the items is cheese made from the milk of the Catoblepas; for obvious reasons, procuring the milk is a dangerous job, so the cheese is something of a delicacy.

It's called "Death Cheese", and with a brilliant name like that, it endeared itself to our gaming group immediately.

FR also has gorgonzola, a blue cheese made (by drow?) from gorgon milk. :D

Deadmanwalking

05-07-2008 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Just posting to note that this was one of the first three RPG books I owned (the others were the PHB and DMG, obviously. All back in...4th Grade, I think), and I still remember reading through it the Christmas Break I got it. Lots of fun. :)

I have and will be watching this thread with interest, though I do occasionally disagree (the catoblepas picture wasn't *that* bad).

sim_james

05-07-2008 08:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That Ecology information isn't *entirely* useless. Knowing that Catoblepas mate for life, if your party only manages to slay one of a mated pair then they can still consider it a qualified success - the survivor won't be reproducing.

At least, that would be *my* spin to the Old Geezer In The Tavern.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8837843)

And say what you will about 3e, but at least their catoblepas has a save attached to its death ray eyes.

And they only use it when hunting (once a month) or for defense. The rest of the time they are big capybaras munching on sedges and other marsh plants.

noisms

05-07-2008 10:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 8838824)

That Ecology information isn't entirely useless. Knowing that Catoblepas mate for life, if your party only manages to slay one of a mated pair then they can still consider it a qualified success - the survivor won't be reproducing.

At least, that would be my spin to the Old Geezer In The Tavern.

And to whoever hired you to kill them. "Hey, I'm entitled to *half* the gold, surely!"

noisms

05-08-2008 04:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cave Fisher

A bit of an oddity, this one, in that every time I flick through the MM and come across its entry I find myself thinking, "Oh yeah, the Cave Fisher - I'd forgotten about that."

A kind of cross between a spider, a lobster, and a trilobite, the Cave Fisher knocks around in subterranean areas, setting up webs to ensnare its victims. These are difficult to detect and can only be cut by a +1 magical weapon - but disappointingly the Fisher's blood can also dissolve them. It would be more fun if they ensnared you *for ever* if you didn't have a magic blade. That would make you think twice about dissing a Cave Fisher again.

Better, the creature can shoot its filaments like a snare and then drag targets towards it, a bit like a harpoon, or that guy on *Mortal Kombat* whose name escapes me. They have a strength of 1800 in the case of a tug of war - which I think makes them **as strong as a pit fiend**, if anybody has been keeping up with this thread since the Baatezu entry.

Adventure hook: Thieves guilds prize the Cave Fisher's filaments, which they have obvious uses for - the strands make super strong ropes and the sticky stuff that coats them can be used on gloves and boots to...well...turn you into spiderman, I suppose.

Numanoid

05-08-2008 04:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

i think it's funny that, between the Carrion crawler and the Cave Fisher, that D&D felt the need to make up imaginary giant bugs because apparently giant version of real bugs Just. Aren't. Weird. Enough.

Seriously, I'm surprised that one day they didn't decide to just make a giant grasshopper with an rhino's head and call it a day.

"Rhinopper! 8 HD. Leap-and-gore attack inflicts 2d10 dmg. AC 3"

"Ecology? Uhh... a wizard did it. Yeah. It lives for 1,000 years and usually dwells in dungeons, mostly in 10' x 10' rooms."

"Brillant! Print a layout and have Diterizi illustrate!"

But in all seriousness, I can wait for the entry of my all-time fav D&D monster... the Doppleganger.

Kaiten

05-08-2008 04:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cave Fishers were always one of those monsters that made me go, "That's kinda cool. I should use that sometime," and then never actually got around to using them.

kelvingreen

05-08-2008 05:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8843435)

Better, the creature can shoot its filaments like a snare and then drag targets towards it, a bit like a harpoon, or that guy on Mortal Kombat whose name escapes me.

Scorpion.

The Cave Fisher is a weird one. Really, it doesn't do anything that a giant spider of some sort can't do, so one wonders why it was created. I suspect it sneaked in from one of the designers' home campaigns.

brianm

05-08-2008 06:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8843558)

The Cave Fisher is a weird one. Really, it doesn't do anything that a giant spider of some sort can't do, so one wonders why it was created. I suspect it sneaked in from one of the designers' home campaigns.

The cave fisher made its debut in module *A4: In the Dungeons of the Slave Lords*. This is a justly famous adventure in which the party begins as captives who are dumped all-but-naked in an underground maze and must use their wits in place of their lost equipment. It also debuted the myconids.

The thing with the cave fisher that makes it different from a spider is how it uses its "web". Instead of weaving a net across a likely traffic point, it dangles a string to snag its victim and then reels it in. Thus, it's more like a giant frog with its sticky tongue than a spider. The traditional cave fisher tactic is to have it hiding in the crevices above a narrow path. As the party marches by, the cave fisher ambushes the group by shooting its sticky web at somebody in the middle of the party. For best effect, it ought to be the mage. The party then has to find a way to get up to the beast to kill it before it reels in its catch and chows down on it. Since there's no listed maximum length on this string and most infravision only goes to 60', this can be a real challenge for some parties.

- Brian

kelvingreen

05-09-2008 06:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

True, true. I suppose it's all in the way you play it.

noisms

05-09-2008 07:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Centaur

I must confess Centaurs are one of the few MM creatures that really leave me cold. I'm not sure why exactly, but I can take a few guesses:

- The anarcho-socialist, "we're all comrades who live in idyllic oneness with nature" shtick bores me to tears - I want my Centaurs to be bloodthirsty marauding *Scythians*, dammit! I want characters to tremble at the sound of their hooves in the distance - not tremble in fear at the sound of their self-righteous "we love nature and everybody's friends together" bleating.
- They get on far too well with elves; if any race gets on well with elves it automatically becomes suspicious in my book (I've played too many dwarf characters down the years and I sometimes think it has unduly affected my psyche).
- There was an Episode of Which We Do Not Speak involving an over-amorous Centaur player character and a female human NPC in a session with my old gaming group - and that's just badwrongfun right there.
- That bit in the *Dragonlance Chronicles* where the characters meet a group of Centaurs is one of the most cringeworthy boring love-ins in the history of fantasy literature

Anyway, I'll get off my anti-Centaur high-horse (geddit?) now. Centaurs in theory should be cool, and if I ever do use them in a game it *will be* as marauding Scythians threatening the civilized world as we know it, butchering priests, burning temples, drinking blood out of skulls and generally being bad horsies. Forget the utopian socialist nonsense!

That has no place in fantasy outside of China Mieville novels!

Malignant Marionette

05-09-2008 08:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8849359)

[]There was an Episode of Which We Do Not Speak involving an over-amorous Centaur player character and a female human NPC in a session with my old gaming group - and that's just badwrongfun right there.*

Well, I suppose you're popular with the ladies when you're hung like a horse. :p

Anyhow, this thread is great stuff. Really brings back memories and some new stuff, too. (Yeah, didn't remember the cave fisher either.) Almost tempted to start a similar-ish one with a different book.

Hellzon

05-09-2008 09:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Centaur's are fucking *terrifying* in NetHack.

Just saying...

Subscribed

weasel fierce

05-09-2008 11:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Warhammer's centaurs aren't terribly nice either.

A Letter From Prague

05-09-2008 11:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8849359)

[]The anarcho-socialist, "we're all comrades who live in idyllic oneness with nature" shtick bores me to tears - I want my Centaurs to be bloodthirsty marauding Scythians, dammit! I want characters to tremble at the sound of their hooves in the distance - not tremble in fear at the sound of their self-righteous "we love nature and everybody's friends together" bleating.*

Since when does loving nature preclude cannibalism?

Elemental

05-10-2008 12:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8832733)

The Elven Cat gets a slightly lengthier section; they are to the Domestic Cat what elves are to humans - in other words a more graceful, wise, annoying version with pointier ears.

Those things were real? I heard about them, but I thought they were some sort of house-ruled thing or in-joke that went too far.

noisms

05-10-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by weasel fierce (Post 8850008)

Warhammer's centaurs aren't terribly nice either.

What a Warhammer centaurs like? I haven't played Warhammer in about 10 years.

Heart in Narnia

05-10-2008 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This thread is great. I got into DnD too late to actually use ADnD, but I find it fascinating to see the previous incarnations.

Also, whenever I am playing a bard that is starting to run out of languages, I am going to pick Elven cat. This, I believe, is an excellent plan.

kelvingreen

05-10-2008 05:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

One of the problems, I think, is that centaurs are all well and good in a baseline, low-fantasy, setting, but they just seem a bit naff when you've got Slaad and Githyanki running about. Ditto the satyr.

There's probably some potential in playing centaurs like the Spartans in **300**, but the good-but-dull version is, well, dull.

Hybban

05-10-2008 05:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8851727)

One of the problems, I think, is that centaurs are all well and good in a baseline, low-fantasy, setting, but they just seem a bit naff when you've got Slaad and Githyanki running about. Ditto the satyr.

*There's probably some potential in playing centaurs like the Spartans in **300**, but the good-but-dull version is, well, dull.*

Yeah, the greek version of the warlike hedonist centaurs is much better :)

Hyb'

brianm

05-10-2008 07:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hybban (Post 8851853)

Yeah, the greek version of the warlike hedonist centaurs is much better :)

Yeah, but then you're right back in with the badwrongfun. :D

- Brian

kelvingreen

05-10-2008 07:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, perhaps we can keep the fighting and wine-quaffing, but draw the line at gratuitous wenching? ;)

noisms

05-10-2008 10:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Centipede

Whoever wrote the text for this one really didn't like centipedes. In the first paragraph they are variously described as "loathsome", "repulsive", and "arousing [of] universal disgust". I dunno; I'm not a big centipede fan either, but I prefer them to, say, slugs. Or centaurs.

I also often use them in games. They're a good low-level challenge for a group of 1st level dungeoneer characters, and it makes a change from killing kobolds all the time. Statted are:

Giant Centipedes, which are about a foot long and poisonous. (I'm not sure if all real centipedes are poisonous, but the ones in Japan are. I know a girl who got bitten by one in the neck while she was asleep, and she almost died because of the paralytic effect on her throat.)

Huge Centipedes, which are only 6 inches long, but essentially the same as the Giant variety. As an aside, I was always slightly confused by AD&D's size rankings. "Huge" sounds bigger than "Giant" to me, intuitively, although it's one rank below on the official scale. Am I alone in thinking this?

Megalo-Centipedes (which means Great Centipede: Fact) - a bigger, instakill save-vs-death variety, with rudimentary intelligence. I'd forgotten just how many instakill monsters there were in AD&D. Reading through the MM like this it feels as if at least 25% of all the entries have at least one creature which can end you with a single bite, touch or glance.

Tunnel Worms, which lurks in tunnels (hence the name, I suppose) waiting for prey to pass by, whereupon they lunge out and basically eat its way through whatever it is - armour and all (leather armour is destroyed in one round; plate mail in three). I like this monster. It is getting used at the next available opportunity in the campaign I'm running at the moment. (I'm a big fan of monsters which destroy armour. Nothing like the look of horror on the party's paladin's face when he realizes his plate mail is now useless and he's at AC 9 until he can get some armour from somewhere.)

Wakboth

05-10-2008 03:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hybba (Post 8851853)

Yeah, the greek version of the warlike hedonist centaurs is much better :)

I had centaurs in one game as rowdy, violent hippies: all free love (between centaurs, thankfully!), friendship and wine, but if you pissed them off, or they drunk a bit too much, the clubs come out swinging.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8853146)

Centipede

Whoever wrote the text for this one really didn't like centipedes. In the first paragraph they are variously described as "loathsome", "repulsive", and "arousing [of] universal disgust". I dunno; I'm not a big centipede fan either, but I prefer them to, say, slugs. Or centaurs.

True fact: our current DM has a centipede phobia, to the point that she cringes and twitches when she has to pick up a centipede miniature. Which, honestly, makes me wonder why she uses them in adventures. :)

Ragnarok_Engine

05-10-2008 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8850397)
What a Warhammer centaurs like? I haven't played Warhammer in about 10 years.

I dunno, but I bet they'll sink your fucking barge. :D

Naxuul

05-10-2008 04:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8850397)
What a Warhammer centaurs like? I haven't played Warhammer in about 10 years.

<http://uk.games-workshop.com/beastso...re-gallery/14/>

Not mentioned there is that they're all complete drunkards.

And cannibals too, but that goes without saying for a Beast of Chaos.

-Naxuul

kelvingreen

05-10-2008 05:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8853146)
As an aside, I was always slightly confused by AD&D's size rankings. "Huge" sounds bigger than "Giant" to me, intuitively, although it's one rank below on the official scale. Am I alone in thinking this?

Nope. Doesn't make much sense to me either!

DMH

05-10-2008 08:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8853146)

"Huge" sounds bigger than "Giant" to me, intuitively, although it's one rank below on the official scale. Am I alone in thinking this?

No, but I don't agree with you. Huge and giant are names, what are the listed sizes in the stat blocks? I am guessing small and tiny (which was the smallest in 2nd ed.).

Malignant Marionette

05-10-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8854113)

<http://uk.games-workshop.com/beastso...re-gallery/14/>

Those are the centigors, not centaurs. Although to be fair, centaurs haven't been around in Warhammer since 3rd edition. Back then they were the proper human torso on horse body critters. Can't remember their personality traits and my 3rd edition books aren't here unfortunately, so I can't check. :(I do remember at least some of them were chaos critters, if not all of them.

Smartmonkey

05-11-2008 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 8854712)

Those are the centigors, not centaurs. Although to be fair, centaurs haven't been around in Warhammer since 3rd edition. Back then they were the proper human torso on horse body critters. Can't remember their personality traits and my 3rd edition books aren't here unfortunately, so I can't check. :(I do remember at least some of them were chaos critters, if not all of them.

I think we can rest assured that WFRP centaurs, whether Centigors count or not, are probably horrendously ugly and subsist on the flesh of the innocent. Which is pretty much Warhammers schtick.

I remember going WTF when I was a kid reading the centaur entry - it was the first entry that struck me as being pointless to have, because who was going to go a-killing those nice nature loving centaurs? It felt like something that belonged in a Disney movie.

Hell, the Centaurs from Harry Potter are -way- more intimidating.

Malignant Marionette

05-11-2008 06:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Not that pointless non-fighty monsters are really pointless, since it can evoke the idea of a magical, fantastic forest more for your group to encounter faeries, centaurs, leprechauns or whatever than if they encountered a bunch of regular woodsmen. You know, more like a flavour-thing than a combat encounter. I guess it's a bit like whether you enjoy Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue of utterly pointless crap or not. ;) (For the record, I've got nothing against Aurora's, it's kind of neat.)

kelvingreen

05-11-2008 06:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 8855917)

I guess it's a bit like whether you enjoy Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue of utterly pointless crap or not. ;) (For the record, I've got nothing against Aurora's, it's kind of neat.)

That's it! That's the book with the Catoblepas Death Cheese. Thanks for the reminder! ;)

Malignant Marionette

05-11-2008 08:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8855924)

That's it! That's the book with the Catoblepas Death Cheese. Thanks for the reminder! ;)

Yup! And who gets the shitty job of milking them so the cheese can be produced? That's right, adventurers of course. :D Nothing like D&D ecology to brighten up a day.

Numanoid

05-11-2008 05:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I'm not suprised that centaurs are written as hippies. I mean, when you trying to make a killing machine out of a human animal hybrid, "horse" isn't the first animal that comes to mind.

"Hey, you know what would be badass! Crossing a man with an animal that doesn't eat meat and has fragile legs!"

Yeah, I know the Greek centaurs were a bunch of psycho frat-boys, but c'mon.

Gaffa

05-11-2008 05:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Numanoid (Post 8857468)

I'm not suprised that centaurs are written as hippies. I mean, when you trying to make a killing machine out of a human animal hybrid, "horse" isn't the first animal that comes to mind.

"Hey, you know what would be badass! Crossing a man with an animal that doesn't eat meat and has fragile legs!"

Yeah, I know the Greek centaurs were a bunch of psycho frat-boys, but c'mon.

If you would wish to aggravate my friend's horses to the point that they'd aggravate on you, I'll be happy to email pics of the ten square acres of your remains to your relatives of choice.

Numanoid

05-11-2008 06:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Gaffa (Post 8857503)

If you would wish to aggravate my friend's horses to the point that they'd aggravate on you, I'll be happy to email pics of the ten square acres of your remains to your relatives of choice.

I'm not saying horses can't be dangerous - I certainly wouldn't want to find out what its like to get kicked by one.

It's just that no one looks at a horse's appearance and behavior and thinks "apex predator". No one's ever been lost in the woods scared to death that they'll be trampled to death by pack of wild horses. Ya feel me, dawg?

Numanoid

05-11-2008 06:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8855320)

I think we can rest assured that WFRP centaurs, whether Centigors count or not, are probably horrendously ugly and subsist on the flesh of the innocent. Which is pretty much Warhammers schtick.

Warhammer's schtick being "D&D monsters, as designed by the members of Dethklok."

noisms

05-11-2008 06:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Numanoid (Post 8857527)

I'm not saying horses can't be dangerous - I certainly wouldn't want to find out what its like to get kicked by one.

It's just that no one looks at a horse's appearance and behavior and thinks "apex predator". No one's ever been lost in the woods scared to death that they'll be trampled to death by pack of wild horses. Ya feel me, dawg?

Which is why Felinaurs make so much more sense. (Do they exist in D&D? I forget.)

Still, Scythians are definitely the way to go. (Why would Centaurs live in the forest anyway? Surely horses are more at home on the high plains.)

noisms

05-11-2008 07:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Chimera

Hilarious first line for this one: "How chimerae were created is a dark mystery better left unexplored." Translation: We couldn't think of an even vaguely plausible origin story. I can imagine two guys sitting around in TSR's head office at 4:55pm on a Friday in front of a computer; they've spent an hour and a half trying to think of something, *anything*, and finally one says to the other, "Fuck it, just put something about dark mysteries and let's get off down the boozier." I bet it went *exactly* like that. (Sort of like the Monster Designers equivalent of the Dm Hand Wave.)

The Chimera is a proper mythological beast, so it gets a thumbs-up from me. That said, it's a bugger to keep track of - the goat, dragon and lion heads all have different attacks, powers and and armour classes, which makes it really three monsters rather than one. You have to keep constantly in mind who is attacking which head and what each head is doing, which is a bit of a pain.

Thankfully the ecology section provides a perfect, and blatant, excuse for having a Chimera-battle somewhere in an adventure: Chimera "can't resist" attacking adventurers - which is a great way of bypassing any wails of protest from the players about random, uncalled-for and unprovoked attacks. The DM can just open his MM, point at the ecology section, and say "Chimerae can't resist attacking adventurers. So there."

Also detailed is the Gorgimera, which is just a Chimera with a Gorgon's head rather than a goat's. I can see what the impulse behind that was. Why Chimerae have a goat's head has always puzzled me.

"My God, look at that monster! It has the head of a lion!"

"Aargh!"

"No...wait...even worse....it has the head of a dragon too!"

"AAAAAAArgh!"

"Hang on....it...erm...has the head of a goat too!"

"Er..."

Gorgon has a bit more oomph to it.

Gaffa

05-11-2008 07:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8857541)

Which is why Felinaurs make so much more sense. (Do they exist in D&D? I forget.)

Yes. There's a number of versions; the wemic is probably the most commonly known.

Malignant Marionette

05-12-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

And the lamia too. Both conveniently in the book you're reading. ;)

Sleeper

05-12-2008 05:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8857607)

Why Chimerae have a goat's head has always puzzled me.

Goats eat cans, and fighters are just yummy bits of flesh packaged in tin cans. It's how the other heads get to the good bits.

I'm sure it has mythological precedent, too. Weren't the ancient Greeks of the Heroic Age the ones who developed that elaborate, gothic armor we see in museums? :)

YojimboC

05-12-2008 07:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Numanoid (Post 8857527)

It's just that no one looks at a horse's appearance and behavior and thinks "apex predator". No one's ever been lost in the woods scared to death that they'll be trampled to death by pack of wild horses. Ya feel me, dawg?

And yet "man + horse" conquered and ruled the largest contiguous land empire in history.

It always bugged me that when the Forgotten Realms did their Mongol Horde story, the "Mongols" weren't centaurs. That would have been so much cooler.

Wakboth

05-12-2008 04:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8859301)

And yet "man + horse" conquered and ruled the largest contiguous land empire in history.

It always bugged me that when the Forgotten Realms did their Mongol Horde story, the "Mongols" weren't centaurs. That would have been so much cooler.

That'd be the nadir of FR during the 2e days, when the people at TSR were trying their damndest to turn the setting into a semi-Earth by grafting "exotic" cultures to it left, right and center. (See also: Russian Rashemen, Maztica, Zakhara and so on.) It was lazy and didn't fit the tone of the setting at all, IMO.

noisms

05-12-2008 09:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cloaker

Okay, I take it back about the Catoblepas. Its picture was a veritable *El Greco* compared to the Cloaker's. If you have the book handy, pick it up and take a look, then try to imagine that creature jumping out at you down in the dungeons somewhere: "Rarr." If you don't have the book, you're really missing out on some so-bad-it's-funny goodness.

Another classical favourite along the lines of the Carrion Crawler, the Cloaker is a real old-school monster; something that seems to have no independent existence outside of trying to kill dungeoneers. It does this by jumping at them, enveloping them, and then rather quickly devouring them, while their comrades try in vain to stop it. Quite cool then; I like scenes in which the players are desperately trying to save one of their comrades from certain death within a constrained time limit.

The Cloaker's other talent is having a good moan. (It's a bit emo that way. Probably stays in its bedroom a lot too, writing poetry.) It has four varieties of whinge, which variously *hold*, nauseate and otherwise debilitate enemies; it uses them to keep away attackers while it finishes its meals.

Pointless Cloaker Ecology Fact: They might be asexual, but nobody knows for sure.

Kaiten

05-12-2008 09:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Fun Fact: I have only used Cloakers three times, resulting in a horrible PC death each time!

sim_james

05-12-2008 11:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8861310)

Pointless Cloaker Ecology Fact: They might be asexual, but nobody knows for sure.

Because the only people capable of that kind of research Just Don't Give A Rat's Arse.

g026r

05-12-2008 11:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

"Hans, I know you're being horribly digested, and rest assured that we're doing everything in our power to get you out while there's still something to get out, but... uh... while you're in there could you maybe take a moment and check to see if the thing has any identifiable reproductive organs? That's a good lad."

:p

DMH

05-12-2008 11:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ah, tenebra complexor (aka cloaker). They should have stuck with the original name from A2.

There has been mention of cloaker cities (in the Dungeon Survival Guide and subsequent supplements) and I really wish there had been an ecology article in Dragon to explain what the hell they are.

demiurge1138

05-13-2008 02:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I quite like cloakers, and have used them as Plot Specific Antagonists a couple of times. In an all-kobold game I ran, they fought cloakers in an abandoned salt mine, who were summoning armies of little demons to harry the kobold borders. That fight was great fun because the party was attacked as they were climbing up and down various shafts in the dungeon (why would cloakers make their lair convenient for the adventuring kind?), so lots of Climb checks were involved. Once the battle was over, there was a brief idea to tie one of the party members to a dead cloaker and have everyone else fly him around like a kite... I ruled that that wouldn't work so well.

JasonK

05-13-2008 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cloakers! Whee! Noisms, you left out the defining characteristic, which is that they *look like cloaks*. That provided them with the one use they ever saw in a game I ran: The BBEG used a charmed cloaker as a... cape! He "threw" it at the party when they had him cornered, thus buying him time to escape. :)

~ jason

6inTruder

05-13-2008 06:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Numanoid (Post 8857527)

It's just that no one looks at a horse's appearance and behavior and thinks "apex predator". No one's ever been lost in the woods scared to death that they'll be trampled to death by pack of wild horses. Ya feel me, dawg?

I'm sure the Sci-fi channel will. Eventually.

noisms

05-13-2008 03:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8862674)

Cloakers! Whee! Noisms, you left out the defining characteristic, which is that they look like cloaks. That provided them with the one use they ever saw in a game I ran: The BBEG used a charmed cloaker as a... cape! He "threw" it at the party when they had him cornered, thus buying him time to escape. :)

~ jason

I like that idea. A lot.

JasonK

05-13-2008 03:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8865474)
I like that idea. A lot.

Feel free to steal it. :)

~ jason

noisms

05-13-2008 10:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Cockatrice

Chalk another instakill monster up on the list. I think I'll start keeping a tally.

The Cockatrice is a very ill-tempered and too-big-for-its boots chicken crossed with a bat and a lizard, which pecks you and turns you to stone. To be honest, I'm not sure whether it is actually a Greek mythological monster or not (the word 'Cockatrix' keeps popping into my mind for some reason, typing this), although if it is I doubt very much it ever made it into a Ray Harryhausen film. Would have been great if it had, mind you.

According to the Ecology section, Cockatrices are a bit like reverse Mormons - the females take on a group of males as a harem, who they mate with and have ickle baby Cockatrices with and it's like a little Cockatrice happy family. Except as soon as the chicks are six months old they get unceremoniously kicked out of the nest - and here is our first adventure hook; these young homeless Cockatrices band together in the wilderness and travel from place to place, turning everything in their path into stone. I think that's a great idea for a side-branch of an adventure: the PCs coming across an entire village of statues, with the only evidence being a few chicken feathers floating on the wind... The second adventure hook is the idea that wizards like Cockatrice feathers and use them as quills for writing spells and scrolls. Not as interesting, but still a nice little springboard for a short quest.

Also included in the Cockatrice entry is the *Pyrolisk*, which as the name suggests is a Cockatrice that sets people on fire rather than turning them to stone; another instakill beast, it can do this just by looking at you. I had a character killed by a Pyrolisk once: a 12th level bard who I'd been playing for what felt like forever, and I remember it as being a kind of relief - I'd never quite gotten into the role and now that the poor fellow was dead I could have fun being somebody else instead. And it was a fun way to go - bursting into flame and flinging himself screaming over the edge of a cliff.

Sleeper

05-13-2008 11:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8866421)

To be honest, I'm not sure whether it is actually a Greek mythological monster or not (the word 'Cockatrix' keeps popping into my mind for some reason, typing this), although if it is I doubt very much it ever made it into a Ray Harryhausen film. Would have been great if it had, mind you.

Etymology: Middle English cocatrice, from Middle French cocatrix ichneumon, cockatrice, from Medieval Latin

cocatric-, cocatrix ichneumon.

It's like strix/stirge. Did not know that.

Phersu

05-14-2008 12:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8861754)

Ah, tenebra complexor (aka cloaker). They should have stuck with the original name from A2.

I wonder if the Cloaker was not inspired by an *Empire of Petal Throne* monster called the **Mantle** (or the "Biridlù", see EPT p. 64).

Quote:

Originally Posted by EPT

These ancient treasure guardians are cape-like, black flying creatures which cling to ceilings and drop down upon the unwary.

They then suffocate their victim, gibbering and shrieking in their powerfully muscled folds.

John_C

05-14-2008 12:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Phersu (Post 8866889)

*I wonder if the Cloaker was not inspired by an Empire of Petal Throne monster called the **Mantle** (or the "Biridlù", see EPT p. 64).*

The Cloaker can be blamed upon Fritz Leiber, I think. Can't remember the name of the story, but it was a good one.

Kinda goes without saying, I suppose.

Rook

05-14-2008 12:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8861310)

Another classical favourite along the lines of the Carrion Crawler, the Cloaker is a real old-school monster; something that seems to have no independent existence outside of trying to kill dungeoneers.

For some unknown reason, the writers for the Forgotten Realms developed cloaklers far more than you might expect. Which for me, admittedly, is any development at all. In several Underdark Realms campaign supplements and adventures, they've gone at some length as to cloaker societies, how weird and alien their minds are and what parts of the Underdark are cloaker dominated. There are apparently places in the Realms where cloaklers meet to float around in columns for unknown reasons. Funny that I can recall quite a bit about weird cloaker ecology from these, but I can't remember them ever addressing why they look just like cloaks (right down to faux-clasps for fastening).

noisms

05-14-2008 12:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rook (Post 8867035)

For some unknown reason, the writers for the Forgotten Realms developed cloaklers far more than you might expect. Which for me, admittedly, is any development at all. In several Underdark Realms campaign supplements and adventures, they've gone at some length as to cloaker societies, how weird and alien their minds are and what parts of the Underdark are cloaker dominated. There are apparently places in the Realms where cloaklers meet to float around in columns for unknown reasons. Funny that I can recall quite a bit about weird cloaker ecology from these, but I can't remember them ever addressing why they look just like cloaks (right down to faux-clasps for fastening).

Some monsters really are just left well alone as "things that live in dungeons and want to kill you", aren't they?

You reminded me why I never really got into Forgotten Realms. There's so much of it I like, but the years and years of people putting on more and more layers of development led to some really absurd levels of detail - so absurd that they became ridiculous. (Like Cloaker societies.)

Steve H

05-14-2008 04:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8861310)

Cloaker

Okay, I take it back about the Catoblepas. Its picture was a veritable El Greco compared to the Cloaker's. If you have the book handy, pick it up and take a look, then try to imagine that creature jumping out at you down in the dungeons somewhere: "Rarr." If you don't have the book, you're really missing out on some so-bad-it's-funny goodness.

Flicking ahead a few pages, we're in for something of a run of bad art through the next few monsters. I vaguely recall thinking at the time when I got the Monstrous Manual to replace my Compendiums (Compendia?) that the quality of art was in general worse this time around, even if it was in colour.

kelvingreen

05-14-2008 06:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rook (Post 8867035)

Funny that I can recall quite a bit about weird cloaker ecology from these, but I can't remember them ever addressing why they look just like cloaks (right down to faux-clasps for fastening).

Intelligent design, obviously. ;)

demiurge1138

05-14-2008 07:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8868553)

Intelligent design, obviously. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lore Sjoberg

The odd evolution of D&D monsters leads me to conclude that one of the following must be true: dungeons have existed for at least fifty million years or there's some sort of hyperspeed Lamarckian evolution going on or evil wizards routinely make new monsters to relax and impress waitresses or hey, are those nachos? Can I have some?

From [The Book of Ratings](#)

shirosan

05-14-2008 08:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8828260)

I've never used a big cat as a monster in a game. It just doesn't seem to make sense; why on earth would a tiger want to take on four to six humanoids armed with swords and axes when it could just eat a deer instead?

I'm still making my way through this awesome thread, but I just have to share my one use of a big cat: a PC (an Illusionist) was making his way through a jungle and I managed to keep rolling rolling encounters with a tiger. Time and again the hapless illusionist managed to leg it after taking a few claw swipes, but that damn random tiger kept showing up. Clearly our man was being stalked. He eventually stumbled out of the jungle, down in the single-digit hit points.

Sometimes the "real world" encounters can be the most memorable. :D

shirosan

05-14-2008 08:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8838489)

There's a supplement for, I think, 2e Forgotten Realms, which is an illustrated catalogue of strange items that can be bought from this travelling bazaar thing. One of the items is cheese made from the milk of the Catoblepas; for obvious reasons, procuring the milk is a dangerous job, so the cheese is something of a delicacy.

It's called "Death Cheese", and with a brilliant name like that, it endeared itself to our gaming group immediately.

Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue, one of my all-time favorite 2e supplements. The section of thief toys alone (including ear blades to cut hangman's nooses before the gallows trapdoor is thrown and "bam smacks"--small tubes of bamboo filled with black powder...oh god, how my players made use of those!) makes it worth tracking down.

IIRC, Death Cheese was made exclusively by an order of blind monks, who were immune to the Catoblepas's gaze. So I guess that's one way around the insta-kill ability--scratch your eyes out!

sim_james

05-14-2008 08:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I could kinda dig a D&D setting where dungeons had indeed existed for over fifty million years. :)

noisms

05-14-2008 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by shirosan (Post 8869322)

IIRC, Death Cheese was made exclusively by an order of blind monks, who were immune to the Catoblepas's gaze. So I guess that's one way around the insta-kill ability--scratch your eyes out!

Now that's one hell of a specialized way to make a living.

Mortality

05-14-2008 09:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8871538)
Now that's one hell of a specialized way to make a living.

You kind of have to wonder how it started. Was it just a monastery of blind monks (because that way they can cut down on extras, they don't need braille *and* normal books for example)?

The one day, Brother Jacob was out and came across this really weird cow. The milk was kinda weird, so they decided to make cheese instead, and some years later had a cheese the likes of which the world had never seen. The first merchant proved very enthusiastic, but when they took him to see where the milk came from he *inexplicably* had a heart attack. After a few more merchants died under mysterious circumstances, they decided to hit the braille library.

"Well, it's either a Catoblepas, or a cow so holy that only the most devout can stand it's presence."

"Does either stop us selling the cheese?"

"...I don't think so."

"Sorted."

Malignant Marionette

05-14-2008 10:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by shirosan (Post 8869322)
IIRC, Death Cheese was made exclusively by an order of blind monks, who were immune to the Catoblepas's gaze. So I guess that's one way around the insta-kill ability--scratch your eyes out!

Got the book right here, says the monks make it, jobless adventurers do the herding and milk-collecting. Not that it would be hard to remake if one wanted to, of course, it being mostly a mention. Of course, then you can't humiliate characters who are in dire need of cash by offering them a job like that. :p

Lugh

05-14-2008 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rook (Post 8867035)

Funny that I can recall quite a bit about weird cloaker ecology from these, but I can't remember them ever addressing why they look just like cloaks (right down to faux-clasps for fastening).

Of course, my evolution of cloakers is a bit different.

First, you start with the premise of [living dungeons](#). Dungeons have many life stages. The earliest life stage is as an ooze of some sort. The ooze will eventually take on a more sophisticated and stable shape, generally as a piece of faux treasure or a part of the dungeon. Hence, cloakers, creeping coins, trappers, piercers, etc. All of those weird monsters that seem to have evolved specifically to hunt adventurers. They then develop into mimics, then doppelgangers, finally ending up as dragons (note the shapeshifting theme throughout).

noisms

05-15-2008 02:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

As Steve H rightly pointed out, the middle part of the 'C' section is a real celebration of genuinely bad art. Today's monster is no exception, which is all the more laughable because its descriptive text would have it that it is "one of the most beautiful creatures in existence". Really its picture would only work if you substituted the word "beautiful" in that sentence for... *moronic*, I think would be most suitable. Anyway, it is the

Couatl.

The Couatl is the first (and possibly only) Aztec-inspired D&D monster; a feathered serpent that hangs around in the jungle being Lawful Good. (The Tabaxi might be loosely based on the Zapotec jaguar-man, but then it could just be a D&D mish-mash pastiche.) It is actually a kind of jungle policeman, roaming around fighting evil and telling people off; the text even uses the phrase "catching evil-doers *red handed*" - you don't get much more village-bobby than that.

To help it with this task, the Couatl has a couple of powerful abilities of the most annoying kind - *polymorphing*, becoming *ethereal* at will, turning *invisible*, *plane shifting*; exactly the kind of "Neh neh! Can't catch me!" type trickery that players love to hate. They also (natch) have an instakill poison bite, though.

I find it quite hard to get excited by the Couatl. Like Centaurs, they're a bit too goody two-shoes for my taste. If I was going to use one in a campaign it would be more like a vengeful spirit of the jungle, capricious, unpredictable and morally ambiguous - possibly worshipped by tribes of ape-people constantly on the look out for humans and demihumans to sacrifice to it. It could be a sort of Kurtz-like, *Heart of Darkness*, fat Marlon Brando Couatl, muttering *The Horror! The Horror!* and forgetting its lines.

Deadmanwalking

05-15-2008 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8872768)

I find it quite hard to get excited by the Couatl. Like Centaurs, they're a bit too goody two-shoes for my taste. If I was going to use one in a campaign it would be more like a vengeful spirit of the jungle, capricious, unpredictable and morally ambiguous - possibly worshipped by tribes of ape-people constantly on the look out for humans and

demihumans to sacrifice to it. It could be a sort of Kurtz-like, Heart of Darkness, fat Marlon Brando Couatl, muttering The Horror! The Horror! and forgetting its lines.

Oh come now, there need to be *some* Good Aligned creatures. Both for realism (unless you're in Ravenloft, everything being evil stretches the bounds of disbelief quite a lot), and so Evil characters can have something to fight and kill they can't just ally with at the drop of a hat. If there are Paladins, why *not* Couatl?

And, while I can see complaining about Centaurs being Good (since that *really* messes with the mythology) Quetzacouatl was pretty nice, as gods go.

Rachel Cartacos

05-15-2008 02:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8872921)
Oh come now, there need to be some Good Aligned creatures.

Agreed!

Quote:

Both for realism (unless you're in Ravenloft, everything being evil stretches the bounds of disbelief quite a lot), and so Evil characters can have something to fight and kill they can't just ally with at the drop of a hat. If there are Paladins, why *not* Couatl?

And also, for allies for good characters!

My higher level characters loved summoning Angels for help with stuff. (Important stuff anyway, she never summoned angels for help doing the dishes or anything. :D)

Deadmanwalking

05-15-2008 02:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rachel Cartacos (Post 8872956)
And also, for allies for good characters!

My higher level characters loved summoning Angels for help with stuff. (Important stuff anyway, she never summoned angels for help doing the dishes or anything. :D)

Oh, absolutely! I've rarely pulled that particular trick myself, but allies are always fun and useful. :)

Rachel Cartacos

05-15-2008 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8873030)

Oh, absolutely! I've rarely pulled that particular trick myself, but allies are always fun and useful. :)

I absolutely adore summoning, after healing it's my favorite thing to do. :)

Naxuul

05-15-2008 08:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rachel Cartacos (Post 8873074)

I absolutely adore summoning, after healing it's my favorite thing to do. :)

I figured that summoning is the reason that 90% of good creatures in the monstrous compendiums are planar to some extent like Couatls, Devas, Eladrin etc. It doesn't entirely make sense for a cleric of a good deity to be summoning demons. :)

-Naxuul

demiurge1138

05-15-2008 09:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8872768)

Couatl.

The Couatl is the first (and possibly only) Aztec-inspired D&D monster...

Not so, but they get more obscure after that. The 3e Fiend Folio had the [ahuizotl](#), an otter-like creature with a hand on its tail. It kills people in rivers and eats their eyeballs, teeth and fingernails. Good times!

6inTruder

05-15-2008 09:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8874705)

I figured that summoning is the reason that 90% of good creatures in the monstrous compendiums are planar to some extent like Couatls, Devas, Eladrin etc. It doesn't entirely make sense for a cleric of a good diety to be summoning demons.;

What about the Flumph?

UglyJimStudly

05-15-2008 10:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8874997)

Not so, but they get more obscure after that. The 3e Fiend Folio had the ahuizotl, an otter-like creature with a hand on its tail. It kills people in rivers and eats their eyeballs, teeth and fingernails. Good times!

I don't have the books handy to check, but I'm going to guess that werejaguars have to make a relatively early appearance. Anybody know if there were there any Mesoamerican critters in *Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*? Seems a likely module to introduce some new nasties.

noisms

05-15-2008 10:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8872921)

Oh come now, there need to be some Good Aligned creatures. Both for realism (unless you're in Ravenloft, everything being evil stretches the bounds of disbelief quite a lot), and so Evil characters can have something to fight and kill they can't just ally with at the drop of a hat. If there are Paladins, why not Couatl?

Yeah, I know. I'm not against *all* good creatures in games! ;) But I've never believed good = goody-two-shoes. For example, I've always liked Birthright elves, who might be 'good' but are so xenophobic they'll shoot you full of arrows as soon as look at you. Or the Guardinals in the plane of Elysium from Planescape, who rip apart anything they see as evil.

Sometimes monsters in the MM just come across as hopelessly idealistic (Centuars) or patsies for the DM (Couatl). The Couatl in particular seems designed to be a kind of monstrous Mary Sue - a polymorphing,

ethereal, plane shifting instakill school-mistress to come along and beat you up if you do something bad. They don't have to be played like that, I know; it's just the rules and descriptive text seem oddly geared towards it.

Anyway, it's just the style of game I enjoy - a Kurtz-Coatl would be great, I think.

noisms

05-15-2008 10:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8875124)

I don't have the books handy to check, but I'm going to guess that werejaguars have to make a relatively early appearance. Anybody know if there were there any Mesoamerican critters in Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan? Seems a likely module to introduce some new nasties.

I suppose Tabaxi are a kind of were-jaguar. I've never read that module though.

Wakboth

05-15-2008 03:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think the ixicachitl (sp?) are also drawn from the Mesoamerican myths, at least going by the sound of the name...

Victim

05-15-2008 03:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8875133)

Yeah, I know. I'm not against all good creatures in games! ;) But I've never believed good = goody-two-shoes. For example, I've always liked Birthright elves, who might be 'good' but are so xenophobic they'll shoot you full of arrow: as soon as look at you.

That's a pretty evil seeming good you've got there. Of course, DnD has always had stuff like that. "Hi, I'm a chaotic good fey. I charm and enslave people. But I'm really hot, so they must not mind."

noisms

05-15-2008 03:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Victim (Post 8875923)

That's a pretty evil seeming good you've got there. Of course, DnD has always had stuff like that. "Hi, I'm a chaotic good fey. I charm and enslave people. But I'm really hot, so they must not mind."

Heh. And they probably don't much mind, either.

I think there's a difference between being suspicious and xenophobic and being evil, though. Anyway, this isn't the place for alignment discussions! I can sense the derailment ending in flames just from here, so let's not go down that path... ;)

noisms

05-15-2008 04:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crabman

A bit of an unusual one, this, in that it occupies quite a few niches without ever really properly filling them:

- It could be seen as being an Orc-alternative, in that it's a barbaric and alien species that sometimes goes out marauding, but the problem with this is that its alignment is Neutral and generally speaking it lives a peaceful existence (only becoming Orc-like when population pressure forces it to do so).
- It could be seen as a Mongrelman alternative, in that it's ugly and monstrous but really only wants to be left alone, the problem being that it has the tendency to become Orc-like noted above.
- It could be a Dwarf alternative in that it likes to keep itself to itself, but it takes xenophobia to the max and doesn't even learn languages other than its own, so it can't really be a regular player-character ally like a clan of Dwarfs can be.

This isn't necessarily a problem, because it means Crabmen can have quite a nuanced role in a campaign, being neutrals, allies or enemies depending on what you want them to be as a DM. It also means you can get some good mileage out of PC dilemmas regarding fighting them if you're that way inclined: their Neutral alignment, low intelligence and capricious nature makes slaying them different to killing Orcs or Hobgoblins.

Anyway, a Crabman is, self obviously, a big walking humanoid crab. The picture looks more like a shrimp to me than a crab, in all honesty, but it's a great idea. Once again returning to a familiar theme, it reminds me of a Ray Harryhausen or Ray Harryhausen-inspired film in which the main characters were attacked by giant crabs and killed them by tipping them into boiling hot springs - I'm so using that in a game one day.

Adventure hooks also abound in the entry. First, super-rich and eccentric art collectors often want Crabman artifacts, which they will pay a huge price for: I'm picturing an adventure where the PCs are hired to bring back some art or other and have to decide whether to do so by force, stealth, trade or trickery. Second, Sahuagin love Crabmen and consider them a delicacy (and who wouldn't?), which gives me an idea for a little twist in the tale of a longer campaign, in which the PCs have to get on the good side of a tribe of Crabmen (for whatever reason) by protecting them from the excesses of a gang of Sahuagin raiders who've just moved into the area. But the only snag is, in order to do so they have to steal some sort of water-breathing magical artifact from the lair of a Topaz Dragon which lives in a cave a little way up the coast...

Oddly, Crabman shells *can't* be made into armour - this is surprising given the alacrity with which the designers appeared to have been using Ankheg, Bulette and Beetle corpses in their games. However, it is compensated for by the fact that their claws can be used as weapons; surely the coolest exotic weapon proficiency ever. Imagine a bounty hunter or gladiator whose signature move is to finish off his opponents with a snip of Crabman claw. His name could

be Spartaclawus. Or Boba Claw.

Gaffa

05-15-2008 05:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8875124)

I don't have the books handy to check, but I'm going to guess that werejaguars have to make a relatively early appearance. Anybody know if there were there any Mesoamerican critters in Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan? Seems a likely module to introduce some new nasties.

There were a number of thematically appropriate Mesoamerican unique critters in *Shrine*, including -- of course -- a couatl. But mainly there was a lot of undead, and some wonderful set-dressing surrounding some very nice traps.

DMH

05-15-2008 07:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8876009)

Crabman

A bit of an unusual one, this, in that it occupies quite a few niches without ever really properly filling them:

So they are more human than the humanoids?

noisms

05-15-2008 08:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8876484)

So they are more human than the humanoids?

Ha! Exactly. Maybe that's why they never took off - they are *too much like humans*.

That's it. My next campaign is going to have Crabmen as the dominant species. I've just decided.

Oskar Breytenbach

05-15-2008 09:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think the crabmen are quite interesting as described, but the artwork really puts me off them. I absolutely hate it.

DMH

05-16-2008 05:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8876508)

That's it. My next campaign is going to have Crabmen as the dominant species. I've just decided.

Looking at the art in all 3 editions, I have to say the 2nd edition is the best by far (though the mouth is still wrong from the description). The first is a joke and the third (FF as Yurian) doesn't look like a crab at all.

I spent too much time today trying to figure out how to do the dominate species thing so I here are some suggestions:

Their civilization is much older than even dragons. I was thinking of 250-325 million years. Distant Horizon's *The Practical Enchanter* has a short, nifty article on how low level magic can replicate higher level with enough time and money. With millions of years, the smartest of the crabmen should have had a major impact upon the world.

There are 4 major races:

Marine/coastal are the ones in the MM.

Terrestrial/coastal are like land crabs and spend their adult life on land. They only require saltwater to breed.

Freshwater/coastal create ponds or use lakes to reproduce.

Burrowers live anywhere they can dig to the water table ala some species of crayfish.

All of them are hiver like in that they produce a lot of larvae. So much so that the adults don't mind other races eating the larvae with moderation. Crabman towns are filled with larvae and their predators.

Since they can't build things with their claws, fine work either is done with their mandibles or not done at all.

Mammals were never seen as much of a threat, so humans did evolve. They just don't have the overwhelming reproductive potential as crabmen and thus are still not much of a threat. Dragons are marginal because they were wiped out as threats when they started breathing fire on crabmen. Now they are either in the arctic or in the largest deserts.

UglyJimStudly

05-16-2008 07:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8878982)

Looking at the art in all 3 editions, I have to say the 2nd edition is the best by far (though the mouth is still wrong from the description). The first is a joke and the third (FF as Yurian) doesn't look like a crab at all.

The Crabman was also statted up in Necromancer's *Tome of Horrors*. Art's not bad, but the humanoid arms look out of place.

Sleeper

05-16-2008 09:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8875124)

I don't have the books handy to check, but I'm going to guess that werejaguars have to make a relatively early appearance.

IIRC, transparently Aztec adventure "Mechica" (not Maztica) in *Dragon* #70 had a werejaguar, though that wasn't until 1983.

6inTruder

05-16-2008 10:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8878982)

Looking at the art in all 3 editions, I have to say the 2nd edition is the best by far (though the mouth is still wrong from the description). The first is a joke and the third (FF as Yurian) doesn't look like a crab at all.

No way! I love the 1ed picture!

... I just can't find a copy of it... :(

But I was also thinking of a REALLY odd party of PCs: Take a Crabman, add a Tako but then I don't know what to do for Patrick and Spongebob?!

noisms

05-16-2008 09:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8878982)

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Since they can't build things with their claws, fine work either is done with their mandibles or not done at all.

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There are so many good ideas in this thread, with so little chance of being implemented. You now are obliged to go and put this into practice in a real campaign! ;)

noisms

05-16-2008 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crawling Claw

Nothing says *Hammer Horror* better than this monster. (Or possibly *The Addams Family* if that's more your thing.) But I have to confess it always reminds me of the roguelike Angband variant called Zangband, which I spent far too many of my formative years playing. In it there was a kind of monster called The Disembodied Hand That Strangled People, which killed off more of my early-level characters than I care to remember. The sight of a green letter 'u' moving about the screen was enough to strike terror into my white '@' mark's soul on many an occasion.

Anyway, the Crawling Claw has to be the best example of the "Does exactly what it says on the tin" school of monster-naming. It's a crawling claw. It's a claw that crawls. Like the Invisible Stalker, the Crabman and the Living Wall, there's no chance a player is going to hear its name and say "What's that monster like, then?" I think more monsters should be like that. The Green Skinned Ugly Brutal Humanoid. The Orange Skinned Ugly Brutal Humanoid. The Red Flying Crocodile-thing Which Breathes Fire. The Annoying Guy With Pointy Ears.

I have to confess I've never used a Crawling Claw in a game - it just seems too hammy. But I'm warming to the idea, mainly because the descriptive text moots the idea of the monster gouging out people's eyes or strangling them (hence The Disembodied Hand That Strangled People), although disappointingly doesn't give rules for this.

Another possibility is to allow players to animate their own Crawling Claws. None of my players have ever tried it or even entertained the idea - possibly because, it must be said, by the time you're powerful enough to create the things they're pathetically weak in comparison - 1d6 hit point damage just doesn't cut it when you're a mighty necromancer. But one should never underestimate the importance of animating undead body parts purely for effect: "Look at what I did. I went around gathering the hands, claws and paws from the corpses of various animals and then animated them. I am one sick bastard." As my players generally are sick bastards, I'm surprised it's never come up.

(un)reason

05-16-2008 11:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8882261)

There are so many good ideas in this thread, with so little chance of being implemented. You now are obliged to go and put this into practice in a real campaign! ;)

Yeah, its amazing what these threads are doing for sparking plot ideas aplenty. So much for constantly needing to buy new shiny stuff to keep the game interesting. The big problem is figuring out how to fit them all into a game. Which reminds me, JDCorley never did finish his attempt to get a plot hook from every page of the FR corebook. Lightweight. :p ;)

kelvingreen

05-17-2008 12:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8882300)

"Look at what I did. I went around gathering the hands, claws and paws from the corpses of various animals and then animated them. I am one sick bastard." As my players generally are sick bastards, I'm surprised it's never come up.

"I thought all these severed hands, paws and claws were pretty weak individually, so I stitched them all together, and then animated them."

It's a Crawling Claw Colony Creature!

Mahoshonen

05-17-2008 01:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Another idea is to rip off Evil Dead 2 and turn a PC's hand into a Crawling Claw. :D

Hellzon

05-17-2008 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Argh, Crawling Claws. Those things are bloody terrifying in Incursion* too (I never warmed to the *bands).

I guess animating some could be handy..

*) Roguelike based on D&D 3.x.

noisms

05-17-2008 01:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

There's a 3.X-based roguelike? And where might this be downloaded? I'm always on the look out for new roguelike games. (Although I have to say I'm more a *band fan than I am a NetHack one.)

Hellzon

05-17-2008 06:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8883086)

*There's a 3.X-based roguelike? And where might this be downloaded? I'm always on the look out for new roguelike games. (Although I have to say I'm more a *band fan than I am a NetHack one.)*

[Incursion homepage](#) and [wiki](#).

It borrows the inventory system from Omega, if you played that. Dunno what you'd compare the rest of the game to, but it's not very NetHackish.

demiurge1138

05-17-2008 11:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

In 3.5, crawling claws are much cooler.

Because they're a swarm.

Little bastards.

noisms

05-17-2008 01:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 8884356)
Incurison homepage and wiki.

It borrows the inventory system from Omega, if you played that. Dunno what you'd compare the rest of the game to, but it's not very NetHackish.

Thanks! I like the look of it. I'll see how it compares to TOME, which is my main go-to roguelike these days.

noisms

05-17-2008 05:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crocodile

It's times like this I really wish I hadn't promised myself I'd write an entry on *every* monster in the MM. Because really, how much is there to say about a Crocodile? You already know what one is (a big water-dwelling reptile that likes to eat people), what it can do (eat people), and how to defeat it (run away or stick it full of arrows).

There is one glimmer of a plot hook in there - the idea that "In recent years there have been dreadful rumors that some of these reptiles have made their homes in the sewers of cities in tropical regions, living on waste and carrion." Leaving aside the enigmatic setting-specific bits that you often get in the MM (In recent years where? In tropical regions where?), this is a reasonable idea for, say, an urban Al Qadim-type adventure. Maybe, for some foul purpose, a clique of sinister mages are secretly bringing Crocodiles from the great swamp and depositing them into the city sewers. Perhaps it is to further do-down the just but weak-willed ruler of the city - if Crocodiles can come and go as they please in the sewers, it could incite the populace to rise up in rebellion against the Sultan, who cannot even protect his citizens from attacks by amphibious reptiles right on his doorstep.

Or, there's this Crocodile living in the great river who once swallowed an alarm clock and... no, wait, that's much too stupid to ever work as an idea for a D&D campaign, book or film.

DMH

05-17-2008 10:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8882261)
There are so many good ideas in this thread, with so little chance of being implemented. You now are obliged to go and put this into practice in a real campaign! ;)

Sure, after my other 75 semi developed campaign ideas are played first. ;)

As for the crawling claw, don't forget the dread, a boney arm variant in the first Annual MC.

Aren't all crawling claws left hands or paws?

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason

Yeah, its amazing what these threads are doing for sparking plot ideas aplenty. So much for constantly needing to buy new shiny stuff to keep the game interesting.

New shiney stuff, for me, isn't about keeping it interesting, it is about new ideas I can steal, twist, bend and mutilate for fun.

(un)reason

05-18-2008 12:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8886237)

Crocodile

There is one glimmer of a plot hook in there - the idea that "In recent years there have been dreadful rumors that some of these reptiles have made their homes in the sewers of cities in tropical regions, living on waste and carrion." Leaving aside the enigmatic setting-specific bits that you often get in the MM (In recent years where? In tropical regions where?)

Yeah, it makes sense when the monsters were originally campaign specific, and you know where they come from (crawling claws are originally a forgotten realms monster, and it shows in the way their ecology stuff is handled) But when they just copypastad it into here without removing the setting specific stuff or at least making it clear what setting they're from it gets annoying. And when they graft implied setting stuff onto real world animals, it becomes somewhat incongrous. The croc thing is really more suited to a modern game, as most medieval cities didn't have proper sewage systems for them to grow to that size in. Someone'd been reading their urban legends book and didn't think the ramifications of grafting into D&D through properly.

Sleeper

05-18-2008 12:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8886812)

The croc thing is really more suited to a modern game, as most medieval cities didn't have proper sewage systems for them to grow to that size in.

Then explain the otyugh :)

D&D doesn't have more than a superficial resemblance to anything medieval. No streets awash in human filth,

very modern interpretations of biology, a scientific approach to magic instead of symbolism and synchronicity, even liberal sensibilities about what is proper and good instead of unthinking casual racism, second-class women, omnipresent and life-defining religion and superstition, and awed reverence and pure peasant love for royalty. D&D is familiar, with a few fantastic elements; for most, a medieval mindset and world would be far more alien than even the Far Realm.

JRM

05-18-2008 04:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8875124)

I don't have the books handy to check, but I'm going to guess that werejaguars have to make a relatively early appearance. Anybody know if there were there any Mesoamerican critters in Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan? Seems a likely module to introduce some new nasties.

If memory serves me right *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan* introduced only one new monster to the world of AD&D and that was...

...The Gibbering Mouther!

Now, I'm no authority on Mesoamerican mythology, but I'm pretty sure that particular beastie doesn't appear in any folklore from that region.

The Last Conformist

05-18-2008 04:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 8854712)

Those are the centigors, not centaurs. Although to be fair, centaurs haven't been around in Warhammer since 3rd edition. Back then they were the proper human torso on horse body critters. Can't remember their personality traits and my 3rd edition books aren't here unfortunately, so I can't check. :(I do remember at least some of them were chaos critters, if not all of them.

I don't have it at hand, but I'm 99% sure they were still in the 4th edition Bestiary, as savage Chaos creatures.

6inTruder

05-18-2008 10:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8886237)

Crocodile

It's times like this I really wish I hadn't promised myself I'd write an entry on every monster in the MM. Because really, how much is there to say about a Crocodile?

I came up with a Spelljammer npc last night based off my thinking about yon Crocodile:

A rouge-ish palladin who travels the spaceways in his spelljamming yacht. His animal companion is a crocodile. Though for obvious reasons I'd not name it Elvis.

noisms

05-18-2008 11:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8888264)

I came up with a Spelljammer npc last night based off my thinking about yon Crocodile:

A rouge-ish palladin who travels the spaceways in his spelljamming yacht. His animal companion is a crocodile. Though for obvious reasons I'd not name it Elvis.

Heh. I now can't get the image of a 1985-era Don Johnson Paladin in ray-bans out of my mind.

noisms

05-18-2008 11:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crustacean, Giant

Like the Crocodile, this is another tough monster (or, rather, pair of monsters) to write an entry about: Giant Crabs and Crayfish pretty much are...well, jolly big Crabs and Crayfish.

One surprising thing about the entry is that the one idea that you knew the designers would *definitely* include, the one they *absolutely wouldn't be able to resist* - using crab and crayfish shells for armour and shields - is alluded to, but there are no stats. Disappointing. Oh well, I suppose it's another one for my never-to-be-written *Complete Guide To Monster Armour* which I first had the idea for when reading the [Behir entry](#).

There really isn't a whole lot else to comment on. The one thing that I would have loved - rules for Giant Crab claws lopping off limbs with a single snip - are not included. But anyway, here's a grab bag of vaguely ('vaguely' being the operative word) interesting and amusing bits and pieces:

- Crab males "attempt to mate with as many females as they can" - as soon as I read this my first thought was, "Your point being?" I mean, name me an animal species in which the males *don't* try to mate with as many females as they can. Indirectly or directly it's certainly what I devoted 90% of my time to before I got married.

- Crayfish meat is prized as a delicacy by Nixies, of all things. Somebody can surely come up with a plot hook based around that, if I know the regular readers of this thread.
- Giant Crayfish continue growing as they get older - which gives me an idea for a Crayfish which has lived in the same lake for *millenia* and is now the size of a blue whale. The people living around could have all sorts of legends about the beast, giving it the name Old Johnny or Big Bertha or something suiting.
- Giant Crayfish "do not normally pose a threat to adventurers" because they spend all their time on river bottoms and so would only encounter PCs swimming deep down in freshwater bodies. It really makes you wonder why anybody felt it necessary to create the thing or write a full entry...

Still, nice picture, though.

We're getting closer to the Dragons at this point. I can't wait.

demiurge1138

05-18-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, nixies are harder than giant crayfish, aren't they? So what's keeping a few enterprising (shortsighted and hungry) nixies from wiping out entire populations in their efforts for the perfect etoufee?

And with all those giant crayfish disappearing, what will the giant raccoons eat?

The answer, clearly, is halflings.

Putting the party, once again, in the shoes of ecological defender when the food chain gets a few links too short, and the giant raccoons decide to start using their nimble paws to reach through the doors and windows of little huts.

noisms

05-18-2008 03:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I knew it! ;)

DMH

05-18-2008 09:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I would have the nixies hold captives so that their family members (inc PCs) are forced to hunt crawdads in other waters.

This is an actual threat in 2nd ed since raise dead isn't automatically successful and the PCs should desire to keep their family alive.

UglyJimStudly

05-18-2008 10:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8882496)

Yeah, its amazing what these threads are doing for sparking plot ideas aplenty. So much for constantly needing to buy new shiny stuff to keep the game interesting.

Some of the best threads ever on ENWorld are the "plot idea for every monster" threads, where everybody works through a monster book in order, posting an adventure idea for each critter. Unfortunately I lost my links to those threads in one of their major board crashes, I remember the one for the Tome of Horrors was particularly cool.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8887363)

If memory serves me right The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan introduced only one new monster to the world of AD&D and that was...

...The Gibbering Mouther!

In an odd little coincidence, when I dropped by a local used book store yesterday I found that somebody must have recently parted with their 1e collection. Among other things, they had nearly new copies of various modules, including Tamoachan. Since I lost a lot of old modules during a move a few years back, I picked it up - turns out there's two new monsters in it. Your memory is correct on the Gibbering Mouther, the other highly mesoamerican new critter introduced is... the Nereid. ;)

darktalon

05-18-2008 11:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rachel Cartacos (Post 8872956)

My higher level characters loved summoning Angels for help with stuff. (Important stuff anyway, she never summoned angels for help doing the dishes or anything. :D)

Did she have a friend who did BMX tricks? ;)

JRM

05-19-2008 12:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by UglyJimStudly (Post 8889623)

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What? My memory deceived me about there being only one new monster in that module? Bad Memory! Bad Memory!! No supper for you tonight.

That may appear harsh, but denying your mental processes virtual meals is the only way to keep them in line.;)

Anyhow, I have no recall of the Nereid debuting in Tamoachan. I thought they were mentioned in the MM as a variant of the Nymph. Oh well, you live and learn.

At least Neries are more Mesoamerican than the Gibbering Mouther, since I believe the aboriginals myths have supernatural watery women not too similar to those of other continents.

kelvingreen

05-19-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 888513)

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The backward villagers living on the shore of the lake worship the giant lobster as a god, sacrificing travellers to it every so often.

Milk

05-19-2008 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8889915)

The backward villagers living on the shore of the lake worship the giant lobster as a god, sacrificing travellers to it every so often.

They've worshipped it for so long that it's become a god, albeit a small one. This demigod knows only its own cold hunger, and inspires that hunger in its followers. The villagers intentionally spread rumours to the outside world of a legendary giant crayfish that dwells in the lake, ripe for the catching, and watch as would-be fishermen go out onto the lake never to return.

kelvingreen

05-19-2008 01:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Milk (Post 8889971)

They've worshipped it for so long that it's become a god, albeit a small one. This demigod knows only its own cold hunger, and inspires that hunger in its followers. The villagers intentionally spread rumours to the outside world of a legendary giant crayfish that dwells in the lake, ripe for the catching, and watch as would-be fishermen go out onto the lake never to return.

Even better. ;)

noisms

05-19-2008 09:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Milk (Post 8889971)

They've worshipped it for so long that it's become a god, albeit a small one. This demigod knows only its own cold hunger, and inspires that hunger in its followers. The villagers intentionally spread rumours to the outside world of a legendary giant crayfish that dwells in the lake, ripe for the catching, and watch as would-be fishermen go out onto the lake never to return.

I love it.

noisms

05-19-2008 12:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crypt Thing

The name of this monster is a classic. It just screams out 1950s B-movie horror: "The Thing From The Crypt!" It also sounds like it should be part of the title of a Fighting Fantasy book - "The Wrath of the Crypt Thing!" - which can be nothing but a good thing in my eyes.

The Crypt Thing is an interesting monster in that it throws into stark relief the nature of the average D&D adventurer - a being which exists only to defend its crypt against "grave robbers or vandals"; i.e. the player characters. Of course this is only implied. But the inference was clearly obvious to the designers. Actually, the 2nd edition MM is a great focal point for examining the contradiction at the heart of D&D (are the PCs really heroes or are they actually villains?), because it was that edition in which it was most glaring. On the one hand the core books made such a point of trying to drag the game into the realm of high, heroic fantasy, where the PCs were caught up in the mighty struggle between good and evil and clearly meant to be explicitly in support of the former. But on the other hand, play itself still revolved around killing things and taking their stuff - and grave robbing too, as the existence of the Crypt Thing suggests. It was never really clear whether the PCs were supposed to be Aragorn or the Grey Mouser. (I should point out that I don't

think that central ambiguity/contradiction is a weakness, or that it should affect play in any way. In fact, it's one of the things that, as a 2nd edition connoisseur, I really get a kick out of.)

Anyway, almost derailed myself there! Back onto the Crypt Thing.

The Crypt Thing is basically a skeleton which can teleport you. On failing a saving throw you are transported a random distance in a random direction - or, if you are fighting a particularly cunning one, above a canyon or two hundred feet above a heap of boulders. A good power, although it is implied that it can only be used once (it would be a "per encounter" ability in 4e, I would guess).

The art in the MM can, I think, be divided into four categories: the **Godawful** (Roper, Catoblepas, Cloaker), the **Merely Bad** (Aaracokra, Dracolich), the **Carefully Mediocre** (Crocodile, Kenku, Swanmay), and the **Good** (generally just DiTerlizzi's pictures, with the possible exception of the Goblin. That has a "should have done better" sub-category all of its own). The Crypt Thing is a classic example to illustrate what I mean by the Carefully Mediocre category. It is a perfectly serviceable picture of a skeleton in a robe. It doesn't evoke anything, but at least this means it doesn't evoke derision or vomit. I think I'll try to use these categories in future entries, and see if you agree.

Three plot hooks for your amusement:

- Crypt Things' bones can be made into *potions of undead control*.
- Crypt Things' bones can also be made into *pipes of haunting*.
- There is a sparkly New Spell, *Create Crypt Thing*, for which all you really need is a nice fresh corpse.

These three items shout Evil Necromancer, Player Characters in search of employment, and Sinister Purpose to me. I don't know about you. ;)

Wakboth

05-19-2008 04:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8891759)

*The art in the MM can, I think, be divided into four categories: the **Godawful** (Roper, Catoblepas, Cloaker), the **Merely Bad** (Aaracokra, Dracolich), the **Carefully Mediocre** (Crocodile, Kenku, Swanmay), and the **Good** (generally just DiTerlizzi's pictures, with the possible exception of the Goblin. That has a "should have done better" sub-category all of its own). The Crypt Thing is a classic example to illustrate what I mean by the Carefully Mediocre category. It is a perfectly serviceable picture of a skeleton in a robe. It doesn't evoke anything, but at least this means it doesn't evoke derision or vomit. I think I'll try to use these categories in future entries, and see if you agree.*

That's a good division, I think. "Carefully mediocre" is a very good description of a lot of the art in the book.

Quote:

- Crypt Things' bones can be made into *potions of undead control*.
- Crypt Things' bones can also be made into *pipes of haunting*.
- There is a sparkly New Spell, *Create Crypt Thing*, for which all you really need is a nice fresh corpse.

I'm almost surprised you can't make armor out of a Crypt Thing... :D

kelvingreen

05-19-2008 05:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8892338)

I'm almost surprised you can't make armor out of a Crypt Thing... :D

Indeed! I know my group would have loved a set of Crypt Thing Shinpads, with an inherent random teleport ability, of course.

And **Wrath of the Crypt Thing** is brilliant **Fighting Fantasy** goodness. Those books really did have great, albeit bludgeoningly simplistic, titles. Got right to the point.

DMH

05-19-2008 08:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I wonder why they didn't include the hatori under crocodile? It would have made the entry 2 pages, but seperating them made it 2 anyways.

noisms

05-19-2008 08:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8892754)

I wonder why they didn't include the hatori under crocodile? It would have made the entry 2 pages, but seperating them made it 2 anyways.

It is unusual. Although I have to wonder why they didn't just include Crocodile in one of the bigger "Animal" entries. I mean, the Crocodile entry really must be one of the most boring in the whole book, and could have been pared right down to a few lines. (At least a quarter of the entry is devoted to describing what a Crocodile is and how it behaves, which has to be about the most redundant piece of information I've ever read in a D&D sourcebook.)

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8888594)

Well, nixies are harder than giant crayfish, aren't they? So what's keeping a few enterprising (shortsighted and hungry) nixies from wiping out entire populations in their efforts for the perfect etouffee?

Or the nixies eat the crayfish as fast as they can because the blighters lay millions of eggs at a go & when a crawdad grows up - say to the size of a pony or so - its favorite food becomes, you guessed it, nixies. And an 800-pound armored, constantly ravenous killing machine with claws the size of scythe blades is not something halfling-sized lakedwellers want for a neighbor.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Death Knight

More slightly irritating setting-specific stuff here; the Death Knight is, basically, Lord Soth from the *Dragonlance* books, and the flavour text even goes so far as to say that "kender have been known to become frightened" on meeting one. The assumption that readers would be familiar enough with *Dragonlance* to understand what that means is something I find more than a little grating, especially as kender are not included in the MM itself.

Anyway, you just know the writers got the idea for the Death Knight from Darth Vader. Weiss and Hickman, you naughty rip-offs, you. "He's an, er, fallen "Paladin", right? And he wears this black suit of armour, and nobody can see his face..." I know D&D has never really claimed to be original - where did they get the idea for orcs from, after all? - but still...at the time the *Dragonlance* books were written the original *Star Wars* trilogy was only a few years old. The flesh of the corpse wasn't even cold and already they were body-snatching.

The Death Knight is less interesting than Darth Vader, though, because where Vader has become so corrupted that he is now the *antithesis* of a goody-goody Jedi, the Death Knight wants to have his cake and eat it too: he wants the kudos of being Evil and Nasty, but at the same time wants to be respected for the "honourable" way in which he fights - by never attacking from behind and waiting for his enemies to draw their weapons before striking.

This is given the lie, however, by the fact that Death Knights aren't honourable *at all*. In the Catoblepas entry I accused that monster of being the cheapest in the MM, but I really think the Death Knight has stolen that crown. What exactly is honourable about a monster that can cast *Power Word, Blind*, *Power Word, Stun* and *Power Word, Kill*, fire 20-dice *Fireballs*, continually generate *Fear* in a 5' radius, and has a powerful magic sword? Just because it never attacks from behind? Gee, yeah, if I was *Power Word, Killed* to death it would really matter whether the guy did it to my face or not.

I don't tend to use Death Knights, mainly because they are just *too cheesy for words*, but I quite like the idea of an evil Necromancer who has convinced a Death Knight to be his bodyguard. Said Necromancer could have weird grey skin and heavy black robes; speak in a strange, lisping voice; and have a fetish for lightning bolt spells and a strong liking for maniacal chuckling. Yes, that could work...

SuperG

05-20-2008 01:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That sounds almost EXACTLY like Darth 'I'll use the Force to hurl bits of machinery at you, since you're immune to Force Choke' Vader.

Just sayin'.

J Harper

05-20-2008 02:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Hickman and Weiss did not create the Death Knight - it was the creation of Charles Stross, and first appeared in the 1st Ed Fiend Folio. If memory serves me right, the first Death Knights were 12 paladins corrupted by Demogorgon, damned to serve him for all eternity. I have no idea if Stross was influenced by Darth Vader when he came up with the concept.

I've always liked Death Knights, though I've yet to use them in any version of D&D.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

Keefe the Thief

05-20-2008 02:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8892814)

It is unusual. Although I have to wonder why they didn't just include Crocodile in one of the bigger "Animal" entries. . . mean, the Crocodile entry really must be one of the most boring in the whole book, and could have been pared right down to a few lines. (At least a quarter of the entry is devoted to describing what a Crocodile is and how it behaves, which has to be about the most redundant piece of information I've ever read in a D&D sourcebook.)

You know, a lot of Earthdawn books (and especially the creature book) assume that the books actually exist in the game world. I think it would have helped if the writers of the MM would have thought along similar lines. They'd just have to imagine the Grey Mouser reading the Monster Manual: "Crocodile? Behavior? I know how it behaves! I bite you with its jaws! Where's the treasure?"

;)

J Harper

05-20-2008 02:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Also, I remember being quite annoyed, back in the day, when it seemed like TSR was trying to make Death Knights a Krynn only type of monster, as the entry in the Monstrous Manual seems to indicate. Yeah, I know that TSR wouldn't have sent the gaming police if I had used a Death Knight in the Realms or a homebrew, but it still peeved me a bit.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

J Harper

05-20-2008 02:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

One final point - the 'honorable Death Knight' is definitely a 2E/Krynn-ism. If memory serves, the Death Knight was Chaotic Evil in 1st E. I also remember, from one of the excellent Undead Halloween articles in Dragon way, way back, an adventure seed concerning Death Knights - on their way to attack a stronghold of evil, the party is confronted by an evil knight, who challenges the party's cavalier or paladin to a joust. The knight is a Death Knight, lord of the stronghold, he and his nightmare steed disguised by an illusion. Just before the Death Knight makes contact with his opponent, he casts Power Word: Kill on him, then takes to the air, dropping a fireball in the midst of the rest of the party, then retreating back to his stronghold as some of his servitors rush forth to finish off (hopefully) the weakened party.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

noisms

05-20-2008 02:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Keefe the Thief (Post 8896731)

You know, a lot of Earthdawn books (and especially the creature book) assume that the books actually exist in the game world. I think it would have helped if the writers of the MM would have thought along similar lines. They'd just have to imagine the Grey Mouser reading the Monster Manual: "Crocodile? Behavior? I know how it behaves! I bits you with it's jaws! Where's the treasure?"

;))

That would have been great. I would have loved a Monster Manual written by "adventurers" - made up of hastily-scribbled sketches of the monsters, anecdotes, rumours and eyewitness accounts. There would be no stats; the DM would have to cobble together his own idea of what stats for the monsters would be, according to what was provided by the entry.

That would never happen, but I can still dream.

noisms

05-20-2008 02:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 8896750)

One final point - the 'honorable Death Knight' is definitely a 2E/Krynn-ism. If memory serves, the Death Knight was Chaotic Evil in 1st E. I also remember, from one of the excellent Undead Halloween articles in Dragon way, way back, an adventure seed concerning Death Knights - on their way to attack a stronghold of evil, the party is confronted by an evil knight, who challenges the party's cavalier or paladin to a joust. The knight is a Death Knight, lord of the stronghold, he and his nightmare steed disguised by an illusion. Just before the Death Knight makes contact with his opponent, he casts Power Word: Kill on him, then takes to the air, dropping a fireball in the midst of the rest of the party, then retreating back to his stronghold as some of his servitors rush forth to finish off (hopefully) the weakened party.

That's very interesting, and much more in keeping with how I think a Death Knight *should* act. An anti-Paladin should stand against *everything* a Paladin stands for, including acting honourably.

Skiorht

05-20-2008 02:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 8896728)

Hickman and Weiss did not create the Death Knight - it was the creation of Charles Stross, and first appeared in the 1st Ed Fiend Folio. If memory serves me right, the first Death Knights were 12 paladins corrupted by Demogorgon, damned to serve him for all eternity. I have no idea if Stross was influenced by Darth Vader when he came up with the concept.

It seems to me that the original Death Knight was more influenced by Moorcock than Star Wars. I got a very strong Prince Gaynor the Damned -vibe from the Fiend Folio entry.

E.T.Smith

05-20-2008 02:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I forget where (it was probably a TSR-era *Dragon* article) but I once read that Death Knights were specifically conceived to be a martial-themed counterpart to the Lich. Given their array of spell-like abilities, I don't much see the point, but they're well designed for being a campaign's big-bad, more hinted at in the background than seen until faced in a final apocalyptic battle that only half the party survives.

It's interesting that, even only up into the D's, it's apparent how thematically random and tone deaf the foe selection was in the MM. Individual entries natter on about pseudo-ecology and in-setting behaviors but never break [kayfabe](#) to directly address the DM how the creatures should function as tools for creating challenge or fun. I wonder how many neophyte DM's randomly opened up the MM, threw a Death Knight at the party and prematurely ended their first campaign.

kelvingreen

05-20-2008 05:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8896627)

The assumption that readers would be familiar enough with Dragonlance to understand what that means is something I find more than a little grating, especially as kender are not included in the MM itself.

You don't need the stats, just take a standard halfling and apply a -18 Charisma modifier.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8896786)

That would have been great. I would have loved a Monster Manual written by "adventurers" - made up of hastily-

scribbled sketches of the monsters, anecdotes, rumours and eyewitness accounts. There would be no stats; the DM would have to cobble together his own idea of what stats for the monsters would be, according to what was provided by the entry.

That would never happen, but I can still dream.

Although it does include the stats, the **Bestiary** produced for the short-lived SAGA system uses flavour text (rather than game text) almost exclusively, so you get a good feel of how people in the setting view the monsters, accurately or not. It's generally regarded as one of the best monster books produced for an rpg system, and is fiendishly difficult to find as a result. I think the images are all drawn "in character" too.

noisms

05-20-2008 05:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8897103)

You don't need the stats, just take a standard halfling and apply a -18 Charisma modifier.

And give it 1d1 Hit Dice too, preferably.

Quote:

Although it does include the stats, the **Bestiary** produced for the short-lived SAGA system uses flavour text (rather than game text) almost exclusively, so you get a good feel of how people in the setting view the monsters, accurately or not. It's generally regarded as one of the best monster books produced for an rpg system, and is fiendishly difficult to find as a result. I think the images are all drawn "in character" too.

I'll see if I can find that someday.

Wakboth

05-20-2008 08:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 8896728)

Hickman and Weiss did not create the Death Knight - it was the creation of Charles Stross, and first appeared in the 1st Ed Fiend Folio. If memory serves me right, the first Death Knights were 12 paladins corrupted by Demogorgon, damned to serve him for all eternity. I have no idea if Stross was influenced by Darth Vader when he came up with the concept.

Stross also invented the Githyanki (although the name comes from GRRMartin) and Githzerai, as well as the

Slaadi. And he's an excellent SF writer, too! :D

The whole "Chaotic Evil, but still acts with honor" thing was silly, though. Just make the monster LE, if you want that!

sim_james

05-20-2008 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8897103)

*Although it does include the stats, the **Bestiary** produced for the short-lived SAGA system uses flavour text (rather than game text) almost exclusively, so you get a good feel of how people in the setting view the monsters, accurately or not. It's generally regarded as one of the best monster books produced for an rpg system, and is fiendishly difficult to find as a result. I think the images are all drawn "in character" too.*

That's exactly what I was going to mention. The Bestiary is a beautiful book. It makes those "Cat, Large" entries worth reading. :D

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8897412)

The whole "Chaotic Evil, but still acts with honor" thing was silly, though. Just make the monster LE, if you want that

I believe that in Dragonlance at least, the whole "evil but honourable" thing was a lie. Death Knights might maintain the facade of honour, but they are creatures of vile treachery.

DMH

05-20-2008 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8897412)

The whole "Chaotic Evil, but still acts with honor" thing was silly, though. Just make the monster LE, if you want that

You have to remember that back then CE was more evil than LE or NE. Which is silly since NE is the evillest, obviously! ;)

DMH

05-22-2008 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I forgot one basic that is vital- umber hulks. They are the fastest way to expand a dungeon lair.

And for the really evil DM, use shadow dragons in place of the deep or sapphire.

6inTruder

05-22-2008 10:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8901914)

the Deepspawn is the creature that lives in the garbage disposal machine aboard the Death Star.

I thought that was the Otyugh(sp?)?

noisms

05-22-2008 01:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dinosaur

I love dinosaurs, and have done since I was a kid. Just last week I tried to put some National Geographic dinosaur posters up on the walls of my bedroom, but my wife made me take them down. I tried to tell her it would be educational, but she just wouldn't listen.

The descriptive text for the Dinosaurs is remarkably scientific. Whereas all the other entries contain vague pseudo-scientific nonsense supposedly uncovered by "sages", suddenly in the Dinosaur entry we find mention of "endothermic and exothermic" animals, "pelvic structures", and "thecodonts". Sages do make an appearance at the end, though - puzzling over the extinction of Dinosaurs in worlds in which they no longer exist, and theorising that they are the ancestors of Lizardmen (!).

Ah, Dinosaurs, how I do love thee, let me count the ways:

Ankylosaurus: A big armour-plated beast with a club-like tail that does 3d6 damage.

Deinonychus: A raptor-like creature which jumps at you and rakes you with its nasty foot-claws. Trivia Fun: the Velosoraptor (sp?) from the Jurassic Park films was, in real life, only about 3' high. Michael Crichton based his concept for the creature on the Deinonychus.

Diplodocus: A big Sauropod which tramples for 3d10 damage and tail-slaps for 2d8. The bigger *Brachiosaurus* tramples for 8d10 damage.

Elasmosaurus: This "looks like a snake with fins and a thick body", if you can imagine what on earth that means. It's an underwater predator.

Lambeosaurus: This is a "peaceful herbivore" - I'm not sure why they bothered statting it; do you know any DMs who make use of peaceful herbivores in D&D games?

Pteranodon: A fun flying beastie which can carry off anything up to four times its weight (50lbs). Unfortunately, it doesn't sound as if that means it can be ridden. Maybe by a gnome.

Stegosaurus: The famous plated, spike-tailed, walnut-brained Dinosaur which I'm sure you remember.

Triceratops: A 10-ton tank of a thing, which charges around like a rhino.

Tyrannosaurus: We all know this one. The MM describes, with peculiar relish, the fact that "[the creature is] so relentlessly and stupidly fierce that it will attack a small triceratops, kill it, and swallow its head in one gulp -- thus killing itself in a matter of hours as the horns of the victim pierce the stomach of the victor." How weird is that?

There really needs to be a Lost World, Dinosaur-ride-type campaign setting, *a la Dinotopia*, for D&D. (I heard that halflings in Eberron ride Dinosaurs, but that doesn't count.)

brianm

05-22-2008 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Yeah, but doesn't the pic of those two dinos make it look like they're in the middle of a tickle-fight or something? :D

- Brian

noisms

05-22-2008 01:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8906163)

Yeah, but doesn't the pic of those two dinos make it look like they're in the middle of a tickle-fight or something? :D

- Brian

Ha! It really does. Maybe they took it from Dinosaur *Playboy*: This is what Jenny the Tyrannosaur and Cheyenne the Triceratops get up to when they're chilling out at the Playboy mansion.

The Dinosaur picture really doesn't look like any of the other art in the book. I wonder who drew it.

Oskar Breytenbach

05-22-2008 08:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

The descriptive text for the Dinosaurs is remarkably scientific

I think they lose points for including the Pteranodon and Elasmosaurus, which are not dinosaurs. But, they gain a few back by pointing out that the Pteranodon has no teeth (take note, Jurassic Park 3).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8906123)

The MM describes, with peculiar relish, the fact that "[the creatures is] so relentlessly and stupidly fierce that it will attack a small triceratops, kill it, and swallow its head in one gulp -- thus killing itself in a matter of hours as the horns of the victim pierce the stomach of the victor." How weird is that?

It's so weird that it almost makes me wonder if they based that idea on some peculiar fossil evidence. Surely no one just made that up out of nowhere? :confused:

DMH

05-22-2008 10:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The 2nd Annual MC has an additional 20 dinosaurs (and related critters). I think they simply updated all the old ones from the 1st edition MMs.

blizack

05-22-2008 10:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Oskar Breytenbach (Post 8906996)

It's so weird that it almost makes me wonder if they based that idea on some peculiar fossil evidence. Surely no one just made that up out of nowhere? :confused:

Nope, they made it up out of nowhere.

blizack

05-22-2008 10:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8906123)

Deinonychus: A raptor-like creature which jumps at you and rakes you with its nasty foot-claws. Trivia Fun: the Velosoraptor (sp?) from the Jurassic Park films was, in real life, only about 3' high. Michael Crichton based his concept for the creature on the Deinonychus.

Some paleontologists think *Deinonychus* and *Velociraptor* are actually two different species of the same genus, and since the name "*Velociraptor*" is the older one, it would take precedence. I think Crichton was getting a lot

of his information from a (very good) book called **Predatory Dinosaurs of the World** by Gregory S. Paul, who is one of the *Deinonychus*=*Velociraptor* guys.

A dinosaur geek is me!

Sleeper

05-23-2008 01:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by blizack (Post 8907405)
A dinosaur geek is me!

Another geekish note is that while the specimens normally associated with the *Velociraptor* genus are tiny, even the much larger specimens associated with the *Deinonychus* genus are still considerably smaller than the raptors in *Jurassic Park*. There weren't any raptors of that size known before the film began production, yet while the film was being produced, a dromaeosaurid that dwarfed even the super-sized movie version was discovered (the *Utahraptor*).

blizack

05-23-2008 01:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 8907771)
Another geekish note is that while the specimens normally associated with the Velociraptor genus are tiny, even the much larger specimens associated with the Deinonychus genus are still considerably smaller than the raptors in Jurassic Park. There weren't any raptors of that size known before the film began production, yet while the film was being produced, a dromaeosaurid that dwarfed even the super-sized movie version was discovered (the Utahraptor).

Correct! Actually, I think *Utahraptor* showed up in one of the 3rd edition books.

DMH

05-23-2008 04:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I know it was in a Dungeon for 2nd ed. The cover was a revenant monk bursting out of its grave.

What I like about the adventure was the dinosaurs eating a type IV demon. The demon thought it could take them and found itself in the Abyss a minute or two later. Otherwise it was very bland and any similar sized carnivore could have replaced them.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Displacer Beast

After quite an extended period of Merely Bad and Carefully Mediocre art, we finally get another Good one. And this one really is good; definitely Top 20 material. It can't be said often enough how genuinely brilliant DiTerlizzi was as a D&D artist - it's good for him but a shame for us that he's found the mainstream success he has!

I like Displacer Beasts. What isn't there to like about a six-legged giant puma with tentacles growing out of its shoulders and which has no other motivation than hatred for all other forms of life? Nothing, is the answer. It's a solid gold D&D monster. Even its power - *displacement* - is great: the ability to appear to be 3' away from where it really is.

There is a lot of customary and unnecessary Ecology information included in the text (young reach maturity after 4 months, followed by a 2 month perio... zzzzzzzz.....). Ignore it. All you need to know is that Displacer Beasts roam around in packs, killing for pleasure, and generally shouting "We exist for adventurers to come and try to hunt us down!"

Other plot hooks are the obvious body-pilfering-related ones: Sages and alchemists like Displacer Beast hides for preparing certain spells and potions, and thieves look on their eyes as good luck charms. The latter makes me think: Thieves guild, megalomaniac guild-master, player characters, mission to get a Displacer Beast eye, difficulty in obtaining payment for completion of said mission, all manner of hi-jinks...

Obligatory "Bit that makes you go, 'Eh?'"': *Displacer beasts harbor an undying hatred of blink dogs. Many theories attempt to account for this enmity. Some sages believe it springs from antipathy in temperaments -- the lawful good blink dog would naturally be the enemy of a creature as savage and destructive as the displacer beast. Others argue that it is the displacement and blink abilities which cause this antipathy -- the two abilities, when in close proximity, somehow stimulate the nervous system and produce hostile reactions. Encounters between the two breeds are rare however, since they do not share the same territory.*

Numanoid

05-23-2008 11:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8910252)

[u][size="5"]

Obligatory "Bit that makes you go, 'Eh?'"': Displacer beasts harbor an undying hatred of blink dogs. Many theories attempt to account for this enmity. Some sages believe it springs from antipathy in temperaments -- the lawful good blink dog would naturally be the enemy of a creature as savage and destructive as the displacer beast. Others argue that it is the displacement and blink abilities which cause this antipathy -- the two abilities, when in close proximity, somehow stimulate the nervous system and produce hostile reactions. Encounters between the two breeds are rare however, since they do not share the same territory.

Seems like a classic "Cats vs. Dogs" scenario to me.

I bet Displacer Beast kittens are still the cutest, though.

6inTruder

05-23-2008 11:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8910252)

Displacer Beast

*There is a lot of customary and unnecessary Ecology information included in the text (young reach maturity after 4 months, followed by a 2 month perio... zzzzzzzz.....). Ignore it. All you need to know is that Displacer Beasts roam around in packs, killing for pleasure, and generally shouting **"We exist for adventurers to come and try to hunt us down!"***

Not always.

Wiends-Rulebook-Heavily

05-23-2008 12:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Man, all these one-shot-kill monsters remind me of how I dealt with them.

Usually the party needed a native guide for the local lingo and to get anywhere, because I was a stickler for enforcing language restrictions and skill use for survival and navigation and no one ever wanted to play a ranger or druid. It also meant I had a convenient redshirt to kill to show everyone how serious the situation was, so if there were henchmen/native guides around, they'd inevitably catch the worst of any horrible instant death the monster of the week could dish out.

And I didn't set out to do that, it just sort of happened and got stuck. It underscored the seriousness of the situation without using a PC for target practice, and occasionally made for good RP fodder as they furiously sought out a sage to teach them about that *really freaky thing* that ate Bruno the baggage handler.

I need to start doing more of that again. :D

A Letter From Prague

05-23-2008 02:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wiends-Rulebook-Heavily (Post 8910421)

Man, all these one-shot-kill monsters remind me of how I dealt with them.

Usually the party needed a native guide for the local lingo and to get anywhere, because I was a stickler for enforcing language restrictions and skill use for survival and navigation and no one ever wanted to play a ranger or druid. It also meant I had a convenient redshirt to kill to show everyone how serious the situation was, so if there were henchmen/native guides around, they'd inevitably catch the worst of any horrible instant death the monster of the

week could dish out.

I was just talking about how Indy 4 needed more of those.

noisms

05-24-2008 11:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dog

"A four legged, furry canine, with..." No, I'm kidding; the MM doesn't bother explaining what a dog is. No messing around here: let's get straight into the doggy goodness.

Wild Dog: A dog that's wild, but which can be tamed. PETA girl had a hand in this entry; it was felt necessary to stress that wild dogs (like wolves) don't attack humans unless provoked or extremely hungry. Cry me a river, liberal!

War Dog: Like wild dogs, these are apparently "not usually vicious, and rarely attack without cause." Come off it, PETA girl. The thing's name is *WAR Dog*. **War Dog**. War.

Blink Dog: I'd like to know who came up with the idea for Blink Dogs. Not that it's a bad idea; it's just a distinctly odd one. Why a Blink *Dog* and not, say, a Blink Monkey, Lion, Elephant or Snake? (Maybe there are Blink [Animals] in obscure parts of the *Dragon* archives - I'm sure (un)reason can confirm or deny this. If there aren't, you can be damn sure *Blink Monkeys*, *Blink Lions*, *Blink Snakes and More* is going to be my next D&D sourcebook, after *The Complete Guide to Monster Corpse Armour*.)

Blink Dog puppies are worth 1-2,000 gold pieces, by the way. A new angle on my Egg Thief campaign!

Death Dog: We haven't had an instakill monster for a bit, so it was about time - although technically the Death Dog isn't instakill but rather 'certakill': it gives you a disease which will kill you within 4-26 days. The Death Dog has two heads, and, er, there is an 85% chance it will attack humans on sight. Ah, it's our old friend Weird-monster-specific-rules-unrelated-to-anything-else, and his cousin Plucked-from-the-air-at-random. Good to see them back in action.

Dragons are only a few entries away. Do people think I should cover each Dragon with a separate entry or just do an entry for each of the different categories (Chromatic, Metallic, Gem and Weirdo)?

tobygrandjean

05-24-2008 12:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Separate entries per dragon please. ;)

Naxuul

05-24-2008 12:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8914910)

Dragons are only a few entries away. Do people think I should cover each Dragon with a separate entry or just do an entry for each of the different categories (Chromatic, Metallic, Gem and Weirdo)?

I'd say by category, if only because there really isn't that much to say about most of the Metallic, Gem and Weirdo dragons.

-Naxuul

JasonK

05-24-2008 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8914975)

I'd say by category, if only because there really isn't that much to say about most of the Metallic, Gem and Weirdo dragons.

-Naxuul

I'm with Nax. Also, this thread is gonna be long enough as-is. ;)

~ jason

Novatian

05-24-2008 01:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8914975)

I'd say by category, if only because there really isn't that much to say about most of the Metallic, Gem and Weirdo dragons.

-Naxuul

I'm going to have to respectfully disagree here. I would have said there wasn't much to say about a number of these creatures, but there's been wit and insight the whole way. Besides, it is Dungeons & Dragons, so let's give the title critters their full due. I'm sure there's plenty to say about each dragon species in the Monstrous Manual.

Gaffa

05-24-2008 02:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8914910)

Blink Dog: I'd like to know who came up with the idea for Blink Dogs. Not that it's a bad idea; it's just a distinctly odd one. Why a Blink Dog and not, say, a Blink Monkey, Lion, Elephant or Snake? (Maybe there are Blink [Animals] in obscure parts of the Dragon archives - I'm sure (un)reason can confirm or deny this. If there aren't, you can be damn sure Blink Monkeys, Blink Lions, Blink Snakes and More is going to be my next D&D sourcebook, after The Complete Guide to Monster Corpse Armour.

Blink dogs inspired me enough that, in my Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay Campaign, I invented a race of blink giants. No end of fun for my PCs, I assure you.

noisms

05-24-2008 03:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Gaffa (Post 8915278)

Blink dogs inspired me enough that, in my Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay Campaign, I invented a race of blink giants. No end of fun for my PCs, I assure you.

I like it!

I've been toying with the idea of Blink Snakes since making that post. They could be really nasty - poisonous buggers who blink next to you, sink in their fangs, then blink away, leaving you twitching and frothing at the mouth and unable to make the evening's dinner engagement.

kelvingreen

05-24-2008 07:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8914910)

Dragons are only a few entries away. Do people think I should cover each Dragon with a separate entry or just do an entry for each of the different categories (Chromatic, Metallic, Gem and Weirdo)?

I'd go for the categories, personally, although I had a look at the **MM** yesterday, and ran into the Mercury Dragon. I'd love to know where that one specifically came from, as it definitely seems to have been added to the Metallics as an afterthought.

Oskar Breytenbach

05-24-2008 08:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Yes, please cover the twenty or so dragons individually!

DMH

05-24-2008 09:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8914910)
(Maybe there are Blink [Animals] in obscure parts of the Dragon archives

One of the April issues (in the 150's or 160's) has the blink wooly mammoth. Other than that, I don't remember any.

Quote:

Dragons are only a few entries away. Do people think I should cover each Dragon with a separate entry or just do an entry for each of the different categories (Chromatic, Metallic, Gem and Weirdo)?

Seperate- there is enough people commenting that we should get some cool stories for each.

Unseenlibrarian

05-24-2008 09:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8915680)
*I'd go for the categories, personally, although I had a look at the **MM** yesterday, and ran into the Mercury Dragon. I'd love to know where that one specifically came from, as it definitely seems to have been added to the Metallics as an afterthought.*

The 2E Draconomicon, I think, which added also added yellow dragons and steel dragons.

Mr Jack

05-24-2008 10:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8914910)

Dragons are only a few entries away. Do people think I should cover each Dragon with a separate entry or just do an entry for each of the different categories (Chromatic, Metallic, Gem and Weirdo)?

One for each!

By the way, noism, great thread. Thank you.

Sleeper

05-24-2008 11:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8915301)

I've been toying with the idea of Blink Snakes since making that post. They could be really nasty - poisonous buggers who blink next to you, sink in their fangs, then blink away, leaving you twitching and frothing at the mouth and unable to make the evening's dinner engagement.

I think that was the idea behind blink.... I mean phase... spiders.

MadWritter

05-25-2008 05:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 8916008)

I think that was the idea behind blink.... I mean phase... spiders.

I hope that your group members don't have arachnophobia for your sake.

glass

05-25-2008 05:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8915301)

I like it!

I've been toying with the idea of Blink Snakes since making that post. They could be really nasty - poisonous buggers

who blink next to you, sink in their fangs, then blink away, leaving you twitching and frothing at the mouth and unable to make the evening's dinner engagement.

Not quite the same thing, but there are displacer serpents in one of the 3e book (Minis Handbook, I think).

glass.

noisms

05-25-2008 12:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dolphin

Yeah, the Dolphin gets an entry. I know. I can hardly stand the excitement myself.

First things first, let's get the picture out of the way, because it really is just awfully, terribly, grotesquely, *criminally* bad. Not only is it an insult to the MM, to AD&D 2nd edition players everywhere, and to Dolphins, but also to the very concept of RPG art itself and the good name of the Dungeons and Dragons game. It sucks ass. It is a bad, bad picture.

Now that unpleasantness is behind us, let's get on to the unpleasantness of the article itself.

I have a number of objections to this entry:

1. Dolphins do not deserve an entry of their own in the Monster Manual. They really don't. I'm sorry if you disagree, but you're wrong. If Dolphins should get their own entry then so should gorillas, giraffes, gazelles and goats, to name examples from only one letter of the alphabet. Dolphins should be in the Mammal entry, if they are included at all.
2. Dolphins are not "inherently peaceful" and do not take a "benign interest" in human affairs. That's *Flipper*. Not AD&D.
3. Dolphins are not Lawful Good, and nor do they have an Intelligence of 11-12. They really don't, PETA girl. They are animals with slightly above-average intelligence who like to make clicky noises.
4. It is not the case that "More than one ship owes its safe arrival in port to the timely intercession and warning of Dolphins." Nor in fact is it the case that *one ship* does.
5. This entry would have been nothing like the ridiculous rosy-coloured love-in that it is if the writers of the MM had been tuna.

You are hereby advised to never discuss the Dolphin entry ever again in your lives except to unrelentingly mock it.

Hellzon

05-25-2008 01:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

You mean gorillas **don't** get an entry? :eek:

Numanoid

05-25-2008 01:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think a lot of the art in this book would better (or at least passable) if it weren't always placed on a stark-white background. A little background art, even a supporting character (Like a helpless victim or a lackey) would go a long way into making the rendered monsters look much nicer.

Instead, even the good pieces (like DiTerrizi's work) tend to look flat and washed out, because the monsters look like they're sitting in one of those white-room training sessions from The Matrix.

Whitemagebishieboy

05-25-2008 03:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

1. Dolphins are not "inherently peaceful" and do not take a "benign interest" in human affairs. That's *Flipper*. Not AD&D.
2. Dolphins are not Lawful Good, and nor do they have an Intelligence of 11-12. They really don't, PETA girl. They are animals with slightly above-average intelligence who like to make clicky noises.

Inherently peaceful? Were talking about the same dolphins who kill porpoises just to practice there baby murdering skills, and engage in regular gang rapes, right? Dolphins seem peaceful and playful to US because we aren't part of there habitat not because they are peaceful and playful.
But what did i expect from PETA girl.

The most amusing part? an int of 11-12 means that would make them slightly smarter than the average human.

David J Prokopetz

05-25-2008 03:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

It is not the case that "More than one ship owes its safe arrival in port to the timely intercession and warning of Dolphins." Nor in fact is it the case that one ship does.

I'm going to nit-pick this one: there are at least a couple of reliably recorded cases of wild dolphins assisting humans in dangerous waters. You can argue about the motivation behind it - maybe the human in question was moving like a wounded calf (yes, a young dolphin is a "calf") or something - but it does happen. This is probably the only accurate sentence in the whole writeup. :p

noisms

05-25-2008 03:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8918382)

I'm going to nit-pick this one: there are at least a couple of reliably recorded cases of wild dolphins assisting humans in dangerous waters. You can argue about the motivation behind it - maybe the human in question was moving like a wounded calf (yes, a young dolphin is a "calf") or something - but it does happen. This is probably the only accurate sentence in the whole writeup. :p

I'll give you humans - I've heard those stories too - but surely not ships!

David J Prokopetz

05-25-2008 03:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8918412)

I'll give you humans - I've heard those stories too - but surely not ships!

Well, if you take the humans out of the equation... great, now I have a mental image of a ship crewed by dolphins. Thanks a lot!

sim_james

05-25-2008 07:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dolphin stats are vaguely useful, because there is a type of sea elf that can polymorph into them three times per day.

In Dragonlance. And not one of the elves mentioned in this book. But anyway.

With an average Int of 11-12 I suspect that every dolphin is, in fact, a polymorphed sea elf, or possibly that the dolphins and sea elves have interbred in such numbers that dolphins in AD&D are much smarter than on our planet.

Weltenbummler

05-25-2008 07:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

Dolphin

I have a number of objections to this entry:

1. Dolphins do not deserve an entry of their own in the Monster Manual. They really don't. I'm sorry if you disagree, but you're wrong. If Dolphins should get their own entry then so should gorillas, giraffes, gazelles and goats, to name examples from only one letter of the alphabet. Dolphins should be in the Mammal entry, if they are included at all.
2. Dolphins are not "inherently peaceful" and do not take a "benign interest" in human affairs. That's *Flipper*. Not AD&D.
3. Dolphins are not Lawful Good, and nor do they have an Intelligence of 11-12. They really don't, PETA girl. They are animals with slightly above-average intelligence who like to make clicky noises.
4. It is not the case that "More than one ship owes its safe arrival in port to the timely intercession and warning of Dolphins." Nor in fact is it the case that *one ship* does.
5. This entry would have been nothing like the ridiculous rosy-coloured love-in that it is if the writers of the MM had been tuna.

That's seems a bit off-key. The AD&D MM entry certainly didn't strive to make a zoologically correct entry for dolphins, rather they made an entry for dolphins in a Sword & Sorcery Fantasy Game written for teenagers at a time when flipper was all the rage!

Intelligent, helpful dolphins might not exist for real, but they fit perfect in a good-and-evil AD&D fairy-tale world; no less was described in the MManual.

noisms

05-25-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8918776)

That's seems a bit off-key. The AD&D MM entry certainly didn't strive to make a zoologically correct entry for dolphins, rather they made an entry for dolphins in a Sword & Sorcery Fantasy Game written for teenagers at a time when flipper was all the rage!

Intelligent, helpful dolphins might not exist for real, but they fit perfect in a good-and-evil AD&D fairy-tale world; no less was described in the MManual.

Well, let's not get into an argument about it, but *every other real world animal in the book* is described in a broadly zoologically accurate way.

I wouldn't have minded an Intelligent Dolphin or Magical Dolphin entry.

glass

05-25-2008 08:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

Dolphin

Am I being blind, or have you skipped "Dog, Moon"?

glass.

Chaot

05-25-2008 11:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 8918973)

Am I being blind, or have you skipped "Dog, Moon"?

<http://i78.photobucket.com/albums/j1...an/Moondog.jpg>

JRM

05-26-2008 03:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 8918022)

*You mean gorillas **don't** get an entry? :eek:*

Well they had their own entry in the original Monster Manual, with 'Ape, gorilla', not to mention the separate entry for 'Ape, giant carnivorous' so that the DM had a version to attack their PCs.

Come to think of it, the original MM had a dolphin entry with the same touchy-feelie quality, so at least they're consistent. Although at least there wasn't a picture that resembled the work of a talented nine year old, like the Monstrous Compendium had.

6inTruder

05-26-2008 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8919939)

Well they had their own entry in the original Monster Manual, with 'Ape, gorilla', not to mention the separate entry for 'Ape, giant carnivorous' so that the DM had a version to attack their PCs.

Sure. THIS MM on the other hand rolls both apes up under Mammals, and I for one would have much preferred a full entry for Ape, Carnivorous over the Dolphin.

edit: yeah! Where's the Moon Dog?

demiurge1138

05-26-2008 05:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

If memory serves me right, moon dogs are under "moon dog" in the Ms, rather than being like "dog, blink". Presumably because they have more special powers.

Rasmus Wagner

05-26-2008 05:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8896786)

That would have been great. I would have loved a Monster Manual written by "adventurers" - made up of hastily-scribbled sketches of the monsters, anecdotes, rumours and eyewitness accounts. There would be no stats; the DM would have to cobble together his own idea of what stats for the monsters would be, according to what was provided by the entry.

That would never happen, but I can still dream.

I would pay money for that. Set it up so I can print and separate the notes on each creature, crumple/teastain/bake/singe/whatever each individual piece, and stuff it all in a binder, and I'm a happy GM.

Rasmus Wagner

05-26-2008 05:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8899519)

The original Fiend Folio had another cursed undead fighter sort called a "Skeleton Warrior" which reads like an alternate toned-down take on the Death Knight. Mechanically they're just a 12th level fighter who happens to be undead. Besides the basic advantages of being fleshless their only uber abilities are a fear aura, immunity to normal weapons and a pumped Magic Resistance. Their entry mainly focuses on how a Skeleton Warrior's soul is trapped in golden circlet that can be used to control them. That's such a great story hook it practically grabs you by the throat and demands to be used, and in fact one of my favorite Dungeon adventures (A Rose for Talakara in #25) was all

about that hook.

A rose for Talakara is absolutely awesome. And yes, he comes off as much more honourable and memorable than the death knight entry.

glass

05-26-2008 07:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8920188)

If memory serves me right, moon dogs are under "moon dog" in the Ms, rather than being like "dog, blink". Presumably because they have more special powers.

Not in my MM. "Dog, Moon" is right there after "Dog" (and before "Dolphin").

glass.

kelvingreen

05-26-2008 09:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Didn't **Dark Sun** get some weird psychic dolphins?

noisms

05-26-2008 09:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Apologies: I think I was concentrating so much on the idea of Blink Dogs that I completely forgot Moon Dogs had a separate entry.

Dog, Moon

I'd like to know who came up with the idea for the Moon Dog; a big, intelligent spellcasting canine with human hands instead of paws. The picture makes it look almost like some kind of freakish monkey - something out of a nightmare, actually. Dogs with human hands is just... wrong.

The first point of interest is that Moon Dogs speak their own language. Now that must surely tie for number 1 with Elven Cat in the least-chosen-by-adventurers-language-ever competition. (Suggestions for other candidates...?)

The second point of interest is that Moon Dogs are *bloody hard*. Not only can their howls cause damage, they have a plethora of powerful spells, are never surprised, can be hit only by +2 or better weapons, and effectively *dispel evil* at will. Woe betide a party of adventurers, especially evil ones, who come across them. (A pack of Moon Dogs would make a great DM stooge for policing evil PCs, if that's your thang.)

I have to admit to a certain fondness for Neutral Good creatures, especially the "smiting evil wherever it is found" types, like Moon Dogs and Guardinals. They're much more interesting than the goody-two-shoes Lawful Good celestials, and seem to have more purpose than Chaotic Good ones; I think one day I'd like to include a mixed force of Guardinal knights and Moon Dog warhounds in a game, scouring the multiverse for wrongdoers and operating on a "Chop first, ask questions later" basis. They could mistakenly believe that the PCs are involved in some sort of evil mission, and end up trying to kill them. (Or, even better, it could turn out that the PCs *are* on some sort of evil mission, but they just haven't realised it. Until the Guardinals and Moon Dogs strike...)

YojimboC

05-26-2008 11:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8919939)

Well they had their own entry in the original Monster Manual, with 'Ape, gorilla', not to mention the separate entry for 'Ape, giant carnivorous' so that the DM had a version to attack their PCs.

I miss giant carnivorous apes.

noisms

05-26-2008 11:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8922570)

I miss giant carnivorous apes.

We all do, my friend. We all do.

g026r

05-26-2008 11:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8922573)

We all do, my friend. We all do.

I would have loved to have seen PETA girl try to write an entry on them. :D

Wakboth

05-27-2008 12:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

IIRC, the moon dogs come from the 1e Fiend Folio, along with tons of other weird stuff.

In those pre-Planescape days, I think the Upper Planes had just the devas, planetars and solars, plus moon dogs, phoenixes and similar animal-themed, good-aligned critters; archons, guardinals and eladrin are 2e Planescape inventions.

Skiorht

05-27-2008 01:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8922815)

IIRC, the moon dogs come from the 1e Fiend Folio, along with tons of other weird stuff.

Nope, Monster Manual II. I remember the illustration being one of the better pieces of that (mainly) disappointing book.

One of the most gruesome memories of our 1st ed. days features a moon dog. The PCs had allied with a moon dog. We were playing the Slavers mega-module, and the adventurers were captured after a hard fight where the moon dog almost saved their asses. After several days of starving in a dungeon, the jailers finally brought some steaming stew. The players didn't bother to ask me about the food, and the PCs unknowingly gorged themselves on moon dog meat. Later on they escaped and thought to enquire about their canine friend. The erstwhile captors gleefully told the truth.

darktalon

05-27-2008 02:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8922224)

*Didn't **Dark Sun** get some weird psychic dolphins?*

Blue Rose has them, but it's somewhat thematically justified there.

glass

05-27-2008 02:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8922224)
*Didn't **Dark Sun** get some weird psychic dolphins?*

Dark Sun had weird psychic lots-of-things, but dolphins seem a little unlikely given the general lack of water.

glass.

A Letter From Prague

05-27-2008 02:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 8923276)
Dark Sun had weird psychic lots-of-things, but dolphins seem a little unlikely given the general lack of water.

They could've been flying ones.

With hands.

Chaot

05-27-2008 03:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 8923276)
Dark Sun had weird psychic lots-of-things, but dolphins seem a little unlikely given the general lack of water.

What was it, 'Mind Lords of the Last Sea?' I think that's what it was called. Yup, Athasian water dolphins.

YojimboC

05-27-2008 03:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 8922627)
I would have loved to have seen PETA girl try to write an entry on them. :D

There was an "Ecology of..." article on carnivorous apes in an issue of *Dragon* years and years ago. Great Jeff Easley art, too.

demiurge1138

05-27-2008 04:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8922573)
We all do, my friend. We all do.

Giant carnivorous apes aren't gone... they're the default in 3e. If I may quote the ape entry:

"These powerful omnivores resemble gorillas but are far more aggressive; they kill and eat anything they can catch. An adult male ape is 5½ to 6 feet tall and weighs 300 to 400 pounds."

JRM

05-27-2008 07:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8923627)
Giant carnivorous apes aren't gone... they're the default in 3e. If I may quote the ape entry:

"These powerful omnivores resemble gorillas but are far more aggressive; they kill and eat anything they can catch. An adult male ape is 5½ to 6 feet tall and weighs 300 to 400 pounds."

Now that's more like it, now we just need more Oongas...

noisms

05-27-2008 10:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8923627)
Giant carnivorous apes aren't gone... they're the default in 3e. If I may quote the ape entry:

"These powerful omnivores resemble gorillas but are far more aggressive; they kill and eat anything they can catch. An adult male ape is 5½ to 6 feet tall and weighs 300 to 400 pounds."

Oh yeah, I forgot about them. My knowledge of the 3e Monster Manuals isn't great. Still, I like my Giant

Carnivorous Apes even bigger. 12 feet tall and 800 lbs would be great.

noisms

05-27-2008 11:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Doppelganger

All D&D players love a good Doppelganger, I think. I can actually remember the day I first encountered the Doppelganger - it was in a Fighting Fantasy gamebook - and for years I thought it was a cool invention of Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone.

That said, I'm not sure I'm a big fan of the monster's D&D incarnation. Now, don't get me wrong, sinister shape shifters who were created by an evil archmage long ago and who now find employment as assassins and spies are a great thing in a game. There is a kind of subspecies of fantasy monsters who have a broadly similar pattern - I'm thinking D&D Doppelgangers, those things from 2nd edition Planescape called Seekers (?), the three-eyed automatons from the first *Viriconium* book, a few others - namely, they were created in the long forgotten past for some purpose which no longer has any meaning, but which they continue to fulfill anyway because there is no other reason for them to exist. I like that idea a great deal.

But the thing is, I like the proper, mythological Doppelganger even more. The idea of a PC coming across his or her Doppelganger and having to fight it to the death is just too good to have been ignored, but inexplicably it was. In the end that shtick was left to a creature from the 2nd edition Planescape Campaign Setting boxed set bestiary; I forget the name, but it began with 'A'. Even so, it wasn't quite the same: Doppelgangers hate and envy their alter-ego and want to destroy it and take over its life, whereas the Planescape things whose names begin with 'A' do it by command of the Gods.

The solution, I think, would be to rename the 2nd edition Doppelgangers something else ("Sinister Shape Shifty Swines"?) and make rules for *real* Doppelgangers in a supplement. (This is next on my list, after the *Complete Guide to Monster Corpse Armour* and the *Complete Guide to Blink Animals*.)

Still, nice art on this one.

Ragnarok_Engine

05-27-2008 11:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8918418)

Well, if you take the humans out of the equation... great, now I have a mental image of a ship crewed by dolphins. Thanks a lot!

<http://homepage.mac.com/rhurt/galler...eaker-down.jpg>

:p

(And let me tell you, I had to think long and hard before doing a Google Image Search including the word "Streaker.") :D

demiurge1138

05-27-2008 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8924974)

Doppelganger

There is a kind of subspecies of fantasy monsters who have a broadly similar pattern - I'm thinking D&D Doppelgangers, those things from 2nd edition Planescape called Seekers (?)

Keepers. Love those guys. The Men in Black of the planes.

E.T.Smith

05-27-2008 01:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

As far as I can tell, and I think I've heard this confirmed, the D&D doppelgangers don't have much mythological resonance because they were never intended to. Rather, their introduction into the dungeon-delving environment was part of the tactic and counter-tactic oneupmanship between PC's and DM's. Specifically, they were for thwarting parties who flaunted big gangs of hirelings, parties who dragged along a score of bowman to take out the dragon in one volley and just as many bearers to carry out every last coin, running roughshod over all the carefully crafted challenges. The DM would make some secret rolls, replace one of the anonymous extras with a doppelganger and have the monster strike from within the ranks at the most devastating moment. Parties who survived soon learned to never travel with more hirelings than they could keep an eye on at once.

Really, doppelgangers can only sensibly work by targetting NPC's, since I don't see any player responding too well to a DM note that reads, "you're dead, play along."

Sleeper

05-27-2008 01:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8924913)

Oh yeah, I forgot about them. My knowledge of the 3e Monster Manuals isn't great. Still, I like my Giant Carnivorous Apes even bigger. 12 feet tall and 800 lbs would be great.

So really, really, really, really skinny? :)

(Your giant ape scaled down to gorilla-height would weigh about 90 lb. Ignoring inconvenient biomechanical limitations and following the same logic behind the more-or-less human-proportioned giants, an isometrically up-scaled 12 ft. gorilla should weigh in the vicinity of 3,000 lb.)

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

05-27-2008 01:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8925359)

As far as I can tell, and I think I've heard this confirmed, the D&D doppelgangers don't have much mythological resonance because they were never intended to. Rather, their introduction into the dungeon-delving environment was part of the tactic and counter-tactic oneupmanship between PC's and DM's. Specifically, they were for thwarting parties who flaunted big gangs of hirelings, parties who dragged along a score of bowman to take out the dragon in one volley and just as many bearers to carry out every last coin, running roughshod over all the carefully crafted challenges. The DM would make some secret rolls, replace one of the anonymous extras with a doppelganger and have the monster strike from within the ranks at the most devastating moment. Parties who survived soon learned to never travel with more hirelings than they could keep an eye on at once.

Really, doppelgangers can only sensibly work by targetting NPC's, since I don't see any player responding too well to a DM note that reads, "you're dead, play along."

Say, that gives me an idea to go with my old redshirt standby. Rather than having the native guide be eaten by the monster du jour, I'll have him be the monster. After doing the first cliché a few times to make sure they don't suspect it.

Dammit, now I really need to start doing this. Even if I have to start another game to do it.

JasonK

05-27-2008 02:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8924974)

But the thing is, I like the proper, mythological Doppelganger even more.

Damnation. Somehow it never occurred to me to use the "real", cool doppelganger's in a d&d game. And now I'm trying to see if I can fit these into my ever-evolving E6 campaign setting...

~ jason

Numanoid

05-27-2008 02:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

While a more "true-to-myth" doppelganger would be cool, I think their use would be sort of limited - if they only look like one specific individual, aren't they a one-shot monster?

I actually thought of a cool doppelganger-based campaign based around Marvel's "Secret Invasion", replacing the Skrulls with 'gangers. Game would start out as a fairly stock D&D game - adventures meet, kill monsters, foil evil - until

they kill an important PC and find out that he's a doppleganger and may possibly have been one the whole time.

(This works particularly well for settings with lots of big-name NPCs - "Drittz was a doppleganger? NO WAY!!!")

They all hell breaks loose when thousands of dopplegangers who have infiltrated power structures throughout the land - king's courts, churches, merchant guilds - make themselves known and bring the population to its knees. It's now up to the party to singlehandedly bring down the doppleganger invasion, all the while knowing that anyone they meet, friend or foe, can shift at any time.

(Combat note - in addition to rank-and-file 'gangers, PCs will also fight allied monsters, quislings of various races, and the elder dopplegangers who possess class levels and enhanced shapeshifting powers, like the power to mimic spell-like abilities)

Wakboth

05-27-2008 04:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8924974)

In the end that shtick was left to a creature from the 2nd edition Planescape Campaign Setting boxed set bestiary; I forget the name, but it began with 'A'. Even so, it wasn't quite the same: Doppelgangers hate and envy their alter-ego and want to destroy it and take over its life, whereas the Planescape things whose names begin with 'A' do it by command of the Gods.

'Aleax', if I recall correctly. Weren't they also in the 1e?

noisms

05-27-2008 04:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8925644)

'Aleax', if I recall correctly. Weren't they also in the 1e?

Yes! Aleax, that's the one.

kelvingreen

05-27-2008 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8925359)

Really, doppelgangers can only sensibly work by targetting NPC's, since I don't see any player responding too well to

a DM note that reads, "you're dead, play along."

"You've been kidnapped and replaced, now play along" on the other hand... ;)

The mythical doppelganger would probably fit in well in Ravenloft; I'd be surprised if there's no such beastie in one of the Monstrous Appendices for that setting.

JRM

05-27-2008 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8924913)

Oh yeah, I forgot about them. My knowledge of the 3e Monster Manuals isn't great. Still, I like my Giant Carnivorous Apes even bigger. 12 feet tall and 800 lbs would be great.

Yes, that's why we need more Oongas (as in Oonga the monarch of the [Isle of the Ape \(WG6\)](#), the AD&D module by Gary Gygax, whose kind are listed as Ape, *gargantuan* carnivorous.)

Gargantuan carnivorous apes are mentioned in 3rd edition D&D, doesn't one gargantuan carnivorous ape have a cameo in the Isle of the Ape sidequest of Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk? Anyhows, enworld's Creature Catalogue has a conversion of both [regular gargantuan carnivorous apes](#) and [Oonga](#) which they call "Apes of the Isle". I'm guessing this is because they make them Huge monsters, so describing them as Huge gargantuan carnivorous apes would just be confusing!

The stats are a pretty good reflection of the original, except they lack the originals 'smashing into the ground' ability and add a Gallop special quality - I suspect they picked up the latter after watching a movie by Peter Jackson.

P.S. Sleeper is right, a 12' giant carnivorous ape should weigh around 3000 pounds if you a regular one in 5½-6' & 300-400 pounds and you scale it up equally in all three dimensions.

noisms

05-27-2008 09:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I stand corrected. I never was the best at estimating the weight of giant primates...

3000lbs is a lot.

How tall was King Kong again?

David J Prokopetz

05-28-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8926258)

I stand corrected. I never was the best at estimating the weight of giant primates...

A good rule of thumb is for every doubling of height, increase body mass by a factor of ten. Strictly speaking, it should really be by a factor of eight, but I find that throwing in an extra 25% helps to account for the fact that a bigger creature should be more solidly built in order to support its own weight (and it makes the math easier, too - just add a zero).

(Similarly, if you want to make a creature 50% taller - e.g., from six feet to nine feet - multiply its weight by four, not 1.5, to get a rough estimate.)

JRM

05-28-2008 02:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8926258)

I stand corrected. I never was the best at estimating the weight of giant primates...

3000lbs is a lot.

How tall was King Kong again?

It depends on which King Kong you're talking about. The original King Kong in the 1933 film was mostly eighteen tall, although he appeared larger in some scenes - up to a maximum of about forty feet tall. The King Kong who fought Godzilla was about fifty metres tall (160 feet), while the King Kong in Dino deLaurentiis's 1976 remake was fifty feet tall. Finally, the most recent King Kong of Peter Jackson movie was twenty five feet tall.

Gary Gygax's Oonga was thirty feet tall.

Sleeper

05-28-2008 02:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8926258)

How tall was King Kong again?

Well, it's worth remembering that most film portrayals are only slightly more consistent than say Gargantua and Pantagruel in Rabelais' satires, where they can fit into ordinary rooms yet still be large enough that entire nations of people live among their teeth.

The original Kong Kong was advertised as being 50 ft. tall, but on Skull Island he was consistently portrayed as

about 18 ft. tall. In New York he grew again to 24 ft (and even taller on the Empire State Building, I believe). The proposed King Kong vs. Frankenstein version was purportedly 38 tons and 19 ft. 8 in. in height, and Peter Jackson's version might have been about 30 ft. tall (that's a very rough guess). The version in King Kong vs. Godzilla was vastly bigger, supposedly 20 to 45 m tall and weighing 25,000 tons.

Scaling up a big gorilla (6 ft. tall, 500 lb silverbacks have been recorded), the 50 ft. version would be about 145 tons, the 18 ft. version would be about 6.75 tons, the 24 ft. version would be about 16 tons, and the more modern version 30 ft. version might be just over 30 tons. A more reasonable weight for the 19 ft. 8 in. version is about 9 tons (or increase the height to 32 ft.). So far all of them are larger than any living land animal except the elephant, though they're not as big as the larger whales or sauropod dinosaurs. The Godzilla version is also completely out of whack, like a lot of Toho monsters; the height range given suggests a weight between 300 and 4,000 tons, or a height of roughly 280 ft. (85 m).

Of course that's ignoring the square-cube law. Assuming the 500 lb silverback can lift 2,000 lb (which is probably conservative), a somewhat simplistic extrapolation of strength and weight would indicate a 25 ft gorilla would be unable to lift its own body mass. At some point it would have problems breathing, and that's ignoring all the other body mechanical issues with simply scaling up a monster, like heat regulation. But in a world where giants can lift their own body weight as easily as a human-sized figure, it's a reasonable if fictional assumption.

kami2awa

05-28-2008 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8747450)

I won't be able to keep up the pace for long, but work is slow and I've got nothing better to do, so...

Arcane

There are two rather eccentric – I'm tempted to use the word 'arcane' but will restrain myself - rules in the racial description. First, apparently all Arcanes are telepathically linked across the multiverse, so that if one is killed all the others immediately know about it and will never trade with the perpetrator ever again. A bit like one of those subatomic particles that eerily knows where all the other ones are. I forget the name. A higgs-boson? Anyway, this rule just screams out as a crowbarred-in way to police PCs and prevent them from killing every Arcane they come across and, well, stealing their stuff; it's typical of 2nd edition, with its slight finger-wagging attitude and tendency to moralise. (I suppose it stems from the reaction against devil-worship allegations.)

Actually, it's an idea as old as SF; Arthur C. Clarke has a race like this (I think they were called Pandorians) in one of his early short stories. The Quantum Mechanics interpretation is a good spin (pun intended) on it...

kami2awa

05-28-2008 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8784814)

The Beholder is billed as "the stuff of nightmares"; a big floating head, with one central eye like a cyclops, other smaller eyes on stalks, and a big mouth (or "maw" as it has it in the MM - don't you just love the word "maw"? It only seems to appear in RPG bestiaries, unfortunately). The eye stalks have different powers, such as Sleep, Flesh to stone and Disintegrate, and the main eye can blast Anti-magic rays in 90 degree arcs in front of it. These powers are available at will.

In the new Dr Who series, the Daleks are very Beholder-like since they fly a lot of the time. This makes them actually dangerous-seeming since they are a lot more dangerous...

kami2awa

05-28-2008 03:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Smartmonkey (Post 8832704)

That evil druid, y'know, the one whose idea of balance is closer to nature red in tooth and claw than anything else?

That's a COOL character concept!

YojimboC

05-28-2008 08:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8925423)

Damnation. Somehow it never occurred to me to use the "real", cool doppelganger's in a d&d game. And now I'm trying to see if I can fit these into my ever-evolving E6 campaign setting...

They had them. I think it was in the Dragonlance supplement, or more probably one of the Ravenloft ones. They were called Fetches, but they did the work of the mythological doppelganger.

Of course, these days doppelgangers just make me think of *Overdrawn at the Memory Bank*. "Dopple." Heh.

YojimboC

05-28-2008 08:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8926258)

I stand corrected. I never was the best at estimating the weight of giant primates...

3000lbs is a lot.

Ten feet and 1200 lbs is well within the bounds of reality. [Gigantopithecus](#) was the biggest ape ever known, and it's been missing for 100,000 years, but it was a real animal.

6inTruder

05-28-2008 10:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8928595)

Of course, these days doppelgangers just make me think of Overdrawn at the Memory Bank. "Dopple." Heh.

Well, some of us have only dabbled in dopples.

And the Fetch was in the Dragonlance Compendium.

noisms

05-28-2008 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dracolich

Another pretty dreadful picture here. The Dracolich looks rather less menacing than a small dog pawing its owner for some food. Ho hum. It doesn't get much better over the forthcoming Dragon entries either, which are pretty hit and miss.

The Dracolich has the most ridiculously overcomplicated origin story ever, full of arcane rules on the finding of hosts and the performing of rituals. It goes on for ages in a dry, rambling way, and is so convoluted I don't think I ever bothered reading it. Even now I can't summon up the effort. Because really, what's the point? It's a dragon which is also a lich, brought about by sinister ritual magic. Job's a good'un.

Anyway, the upshot is that Dracoliches are the same as their original form, but harder. They have better armour class, do more damage, and paralyze opponents, and can only be destroyed completely by destroying the 'host' (it would take another 3,000 word essay at least to explain what that is - you'll just have to read the entry).

I'm looking forward to the Dragons (I'm thinking of doing 2 per entry) so apologies if this entry is a little skimpy.

demiurge1138

05-28-2008 02:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The whole dracolich host/pseudodracolich thing is pretty dumb. I'm glad it got simplified a bit in 3e to be more on par with ordinary liches. Crappy picture or not, the skeleton dragon did inspire my young mind after I picked up a Monstrous Manual back in the day, and my first foray into roleplaying game country (not D&D by any means, but a

more free-form experience) featured a dracolich as its antagonist.

kami2awa

05-28-2008 06:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)
[u]

1. Dolphins do not deserve an entry of their own in the Monster Manual. They really don't. I'm sorry if you disagree, but you're wrong. If Dolphins should get their own entry then so should gorillas, giraffes, gazelles and goats, to name examples from only one letter of the alphabet. Dolphins should be in the Mammal entry, if they are included at all.
2. Dolphins are not "inherently peaceful" and do not take a "benign interest" in human affairs. That's *Flipper*. Not AD&D.
3. Dolphins are not Lawful Good, and nor do they have an Intelligence of 11-12. They really don't, PETA girl. They are animals with slightly above-average intelligence who like to make clicky noises.
4. It is not the case that "More than one ship owes its safe arrival in port to the timely intercession and warning of Dolphins." Nor in fact is it the case that *one ship* does.
5. This entry would have been nothing like the ridiculous rosy-coloured love-in that it is if the writers of the MM had been tuna.

I think the entry is talking about the mythological perception of dolphins. Even in Greek myth they were thought to help drowning sailors, and generally be benevolent to mankind. In a fantasy world, they might well be like that.

Weltenbummler

05-28-2008 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 8930169)
I think the entry is talking about the mythological perception of dolphins. Even in Greek myth they were thought to help drowning sailors, and generally be benevolent to mankind. In a fantasy world, they might well be like that.

Think we've been over that before.

noisms is very, very harsh on the mundane animals, but to a large extent they illustrate the aim of AD&D to go beyond miniature fighting into immersive world building. (Yes, I know that AD&D has it's root in mini-combat gaming, but everything that made it special and stand out from gazillion like games is that it aimed for more).

Stats for Cats, Dogs and else have innumerable uses (i.e. to be initiated in the thieves guild young rogue, you need to catch seven stray cats before the dawn), as do things like elven animals or lawful good centaurs that aimed to flesh out societies and create a more complete, immersive world beyond the cannon fodder for the players...

Juriel

05-28-2008 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

And housecats to kill apprentice wizards with.

noisms

05-28-2008 11:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8930880)

Think we've been over that before.

noisms is very, very harsh on the mundane animals, but to a large extent they illustrate the aim of AD&D to go beyond miniature fighting into immersive world building. (Yes, I know that AD&D has it's root in mini-combat gaming, but everything that made it special and stand out from gazillion like games is that it aimed for more).

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You're right, of course. And I do appreciate that motivation on the part of the designers - it's actually one of the really fantastic things about 2nd edition AD&D.

My main complaints are the inconsistencies: Why fantasy dolphins but not, say, fantasy polar bears? Why are wolves painted as misunderstood gooder-than-gold superheroes, but bats are castigated as "annoying"? Why does having a fleshed-out centaur society mean turning them into hippies, but having a fleshed out minotaur society means keeping them as evil, brutal monsters? And so on.

Anyway, this isn't really the place to go into the argument in detail! Maybe when I've finished the entire thread (in a decade's time or however far away that will be) we can do a kind of roundup/debate.

Whitemagebishieboy

05-28-2008 11:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8930880)

but to a large extent they illustrate the aim of AD&D to go beyond miniature fighting into immersive world building.

AD&D 2E anyways.

AD&D 1E remained pure, unsullied and all about killing monsters and yoinking there stuff. Well that and random gygaxian stuff.

David J Prokopetz

05-28-2008 11:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8931031)

AD&D 2E anyways.

AD&D 1E remained pure, unsullied and all about killing monsters and yoinking there stuff. Well that and random gygaxian stuff.

I kind of miss the Random Adjective Tables.

YojimboC

05-29-2008 11:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8929040)

Well, some of us have only dabbled in dopples.

I would hate to bobble the doppel.

Quote:

And the Fetch was in the Dragonlance Compendium.

Hah! My nerd-fu is strong.

6inTruder

05-29-2008 11:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Acctually, I think the Fetch would've made a far stronger entry than things like the Deepspawn.

6inTruder

05-29-2008 11:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8933502)
I would hate to bobble the dapple.

Are there anteaters listed under the Mammal entry?

noisms

05-29-2008 12:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

So here we have it folks, what you've all been waiting for: the creature that is the namesake of the game. I'm going to skip the general Dragon information and just get straight into the entries - two per day for, I guess, twelve days or so. Okay, deep breath.

Dragon, Chromatic, Black

The Black Dragon is the goth/emo-kid of the Chromatics: They like "dismal surroundings", prefer darkness to daylight, and "resent intrusions of any kind".

They inhabit "steamy environment[s] where canopies of trees filter out most of the sunlight, swarms of insects fill the air, and stagnant moss-covered ponds lie in abundance." Swamps and jungles, basically, where they lurk under water just waiting for their chance to leap out and shout "Rarr! I'm a black dragon!"

As you all know, Black Dragons breathe acid. I seem to remember one of the characters in a *Dragonlance* book having his face melted by a Black Dragon's breath. One of the pretend-American Indian ones. I forget the name.

Weird detail: Black Dragons like to eat eels.

Quite cool, grisly detail: Black Dragons like to pickle the corpses of their victims in stagnant ponds before eating them.

Dragon, Chromatic, Blue

One of the things that always puzzled me about Blue Dragons was why they like to live in deserts. You couldn't get a less desert-y colour than blue, could you? Although, in fairness, the MM acknowledges this, and makes the point that you get lots of blue skies in the desert, so the Blue Dragons can camouflage themselves against that. (Quite a nifty idea, actually - a great big dragon appearing literally as a bolt from the blue and blasting the party with lightning.)

Blue Dragons are tricky tricksters, who like to employ illusions such as *hallucinatory terrain* and the like. They also like to eat camels, which they cook with lightning (!).

I like how the designers made an effort to show how the monsters had an independent existence outside of their interactions with adventurers in the MM. An example is the rivalry between Blue and Brass Dragons. The two races hate each other, and as they occupy the same territory they usually end up fighting. Blue Dragons are more powerful and have lightning breath, though, whereas Brass Dragons are kind of pathetic, so usually the Blues win.

The Blue Dragon picture is one of the better ones in the Dragon section, which as I said yesterday is pretty hit and miss. The Black Dragon picture, for example, is deathly dull - it kind of looks like it's sticking its tongue out at somebody in a desultory "yah boo" kind of way. The Blue Dragon, on the other hand, is saying, "I'm gonna grab you with my claws, so there."

Ragnarok_Engine

05-29-2008 12:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8933582)
Are there anteaters listed under the Mammal entry?

<http://i24.photobucket.com/albums/c3.../ant-eater.jpg>

demiurge1138

05-29-2008 02:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8933699)
Weird detail: Black Dragons like to eat eels.

Who doesn't? Mmm... unagi...

noisms

05-29-2008 02:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8934079)
Who doesn't? Mmm... unagi...

See, *that's* why it's a weird detail. It should be taken as read that everything in the MM likes to eat eels.

Whitemagebishieboy

05-29-2008 04:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8934085)
See, that's why it's a weird detail. It should be taken as read that everything in the MM likes to eat eels.

I prefer squid and octopus. Also lobster.
Wait a tick, are you including the HERBIVORES?

noisms

05-29-2008 05:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8934463)
*I prefer squid and octopus. Also lobster.
Wait a tick, are you including the HERBIVORES?*

Even herbivores must secretly love a bit of eel.

Mark Krawec

05-29-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8933699)
Quite cool, grisly detail: Black Dragons like to pickle the corpses of their victims in stagnant ponds before eating them.

Now that's a handy bit of info. The party is trekking through some godsforsaken swamp when they come across a particularly nasty slough that's full of bloating corpses kept submerged with unusually large rocks.

Players: "Damn! Who put these here?"

DM: "Ehm, ranger? Make a animal lore check."

Possibly a moment later:

Dragon: "Get outta the kitchen! They'll be ready when they're ready!"

Mr Jack

05-30-2008 12:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8933699)

Although, in fairness, the MM acknowledges this, and makes the point that you get lots of blue skies in the desert, so the Blue Dragons can camouflage themselves against that. (Quite a nifty idea, actually - a great big dragon appearing literally as a bolt from the blue and blasting the party with lightning.)

I hate to get all reality on a thread about the 2e monstrous manual, but this doesn't work. What happens is that if you put an solid object, like a dragon, in front of a bright object, like the desert sky, it looks black.

Which is why Abbott. H. Thayer was wrong about why Flamingos are pink.

noisms

05-30-2008 12:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr Jack (Post 8935684)

I hate to get all reality on a thread about the 2e monstrous manual, but this doesn't work. What happens is that if you put an solid object, like a dragon, in front of a bright object, like the desert sky, it looks black.

Which is why Abbott. H. Thayer was wrong about why Flamingos are pink.

Oh yeah, you're right. Oh well. Maybe if the player characters were flying in on the back of another dragon it would work.

I remember reading about the Thayer/Flamingo thing in one of Stephen Jay Gould's essays. I think it was Theodore Roosevelt who debunked the myth, bizarrely enough.

Mr Jack

05-30-2008 01:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8935702)

I remember reading about the Thayer/Flamingo thing in one of Stephen Jay Gould's essays. I think it was Theodore Roosevelt who debunked the myth, bizarrely enough.

Red Wings in the Sunset? Yup, that's where I got it from too.

A Letter From Prague

05-30-2008 03:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr Jack (Post 8935684)

Which is why Abbott. H. Thayer was wrong about why Flamingos are pink.

To hide in candy stores?

DMH

05-30-2008 10:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

One of my favorite pieces of art involving dragons is the ranger on the head of the black, not knowing there is a dragon there at all. It is in the ranger book, among other books.

noisms

05-30-2008 11:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragon, Chromatic, Green

"Green dragons are bad tempered, mean, cruel and rude." But I like them. Whisper it, but does anybody else agree with me that Green Dragons should be the iconic ones, rather than Reds? I know the association of red with fire, but as a child (in my pre-D&D days) I'm pretty sure I always imagined Dragons to be green, as in the St. George story. In order for that to be the case, though, they'd have to ditch the naff poison breath shtick and switch to fire, and that would mess up the whole sequence.

Green Dragons see Hill Giants as their main enemy, which is another example of what I talked about in the previous entry; the separate life of monsters outside of their encounters with adventurers. Hill Giants like to eat baby Green Dragons. The dragons' main solution to this problem is to enslave the Giants. I'm picturing a party of high level PCs becoming involved in continual running skirmishes with gangs of Hill Giants, becoming slowly weakened...whereupon Mr. Green Dragon strikes! With fire breath! Mwahahahahaaaaaa!!!!

Dragon, Chromatic, Red

Ah, the Big Daddy of the dragons. Even though Gold ones are technically harder, we all know that Red ones are better. They're greedier, more obnoxious, vainer and more arrogant, which is what every dragon should be.

Terrible picture, though. The example looks like a rather naughty child, licking his lips, about to steal a cake.

Red Dragons like to *charm* villagers into sending them young maidens as sacrifices. This is a plot hook I haven't thought to use before, but will in the future. What could be more D&D than rescuing a damsel in distress from a mighty dragon?

My first character, a first level Halfling in Basic D&D, was killed by a Red Dragon. I think I mentioned it in one of the first posts in this thread. It was just after we'd killed a Carrion Crawler. Especially galling was the fact that I think I made my saving through, but I only had 4 hit points so it didn't make much difference.

Numanoid

05-30-2008 04:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8938234)

Dragon, Chromatic, Green

"Green dragons are bad tempered, mean, cruel and rude." But I like them. Whisper it, but does anybody else agree with me that Green Dragons should be the iconic ones, rather than Reds? I know the association of red with fire, but as a child (in my pre-D&D days) I'm pretty sure I always imagined Dragons to be green, as in the St. George story. In order for that to be the case, though, they'd have to ditch the naff poison breath shtick and switch to fire, and that would mess up the whole sequence.

Actually, I'm pretty sure that the dragon of St. George's legend had poisonous breath rather than flames.

Weltenbummler

05-30-2008 04:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Numanoid (Post 8939200)

Actually, I'm pretty sure that the dragon of St. George's legend had poisonous breath rather than flames.

Don't think he had a breath-weapon in the sense of D&D at all. But he's described as *'plague-bearing'* and *'envenoming the countryside'*.

And though Saint George's dragon is usually green (likely inspired by reptiles), he is also a symbol of evil and the devil (Saint George after all, needs to become christian to defeat him.. heavily relying on the cross for protection) which harks back to John's Book of Revelation which describes Satan as *"a great dragon, flaming red, with seven heads and ten horns"*.

Kaiten

05-30-2008 05:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Although I'd have to say that Greens and Reds were always my favorite dragons, I hardly ever use them in games. I always end up tossing Blacks and Whites at my players, mostly because I like sending my adventurers off to the godawful swamps and tundras where those dragons live. I like my adventurers to be slogging through hip deep mud, swatting off mosquitoes as big as housecats (sometimes literally!), and generally being miserable enough to wonder whether any treasure can possibly be worth it.....and that's when the dragon attacks.

Ironically, this typically ensures that the adventurers become dead certain that the treasure must indeed be worth all the trouble. After all, they had to fight a dragon, so the treasure must be awesome, right?

Belchion

05-30-2008 07:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kaiten (Post 8939403)
Although I'd have to say that Greens and Reds were always my favorite dragons,

I always liked blacked dragons most, with greens a close second.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kaiten (Post 8939403)
After all, they had to fight a dragon, so the treasure must be awesome, right?

A dragon is treasure enough, just sell its blood to the local mage guild!

Sleeper

05-30-2008 10:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always liked blue. Illusions, sandstorms, lonely oases, lightning from above, claws scrabbling up from below.

Hmm. Since gnomes are monsters now (RAWWR!), maybe they're in cahoots. The deceivers of the dunes. Small faces, worn by the sand. Terrible danger, both great and small. Striking suddenly, then fading back into the intricate mirages and phantasms.

Cahoots. I like that word :).

sim_james

05-30-2008 10:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dark Secret: There aren't any blue dragons, not really. They are all gnomes.

Tricksy, illusion-casting gnomes.

That's why you can't see blue dragons until they "appear" out of a cloudless blue sky.

Wakboth

05-31-2008 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Having read *The Hobbit* at a young age, red is indelibly imprinted as the iconic dragon color in my imagination. :)

As for the black dragons' unpleasant cooking habits, don't crocodiles do something similar?

Can't argue about the artwork; although it's a great improvement over the 1e MM (whose bright idea was it to let the non-Dave-Trampier guy illustrate the freaking *dragons?*), it's very 'meh' overall. IIRC, brass dragon is simply pathetic...

Sleeper

05-31-2008 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 8940063)

Dark Secret: There aren't any blue dragons, not really. They are all gnomes.

Tricksy, illusion-casting gnomes.

That's why you can't see blue dragons until they "appear" out of a cloudless blue sky.

I like that.

The deep desert... it's *terrifying*. Caravans go loaded for bear... or dragon. Huge, whole companies of soliders, mighty sorcerers from the Stygian kingdoms, and still. So many, so very many, never make it out. The wastes are as wide open and morally ambiguous as the scenes in *Lawrence of Arabia*. There's something out there, something huge and ominous and winged. And the poor little brass dragons bury their heads under their trembling wings.

Because they're afraid, so very afraid. Of something barely 3 foot tall, hidden under an ominous, serpentine, cobalt specter composed of nothing more than ghosts and shadows.

noisms

05-31-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragon, Chromatic, White

I like the picture of the White Dragon, with his unusual head crest and ugly face. He has the more savage look to go with the more animalistic nature of the White.

One thing that always puzzled me when I was a snotty pedantic teenager was that a cone of frost is the least effective breath weapon an animal living in icy conditions could use, because all its main rivals - Frost Giants and the like - would probably be immune or resistant to cold. Actually it makes perfect sense to see such relationships as an evolutionary arms race, with the White Dragon developing more powerful breath over time just as its rivals develop stronger immunities.

What I *need* to do is run an Ice Age campaign in which White Dragon-riding Frost Giants have subdued the entire world. That would be just too fantastic for words.

Dragon, Gem, Amethyst

Christ, it's been so long since I even considered using a Gem dragon that I completely forgot about their psionic

abilities. That adds something, I suppose, although I always found psionic monsters a little annoying. Not because I hate psionics, but because people who didn't have the psionics handbook (e.g. most of my group) couldn't use such monsters in games without heavy rule alterations and complicated ways of replacing psionics with magic.

Amethysts are wise, regal jobbies who hang out in underground lakes eating fish and spitting explosive ~~threat~~ sweets lozenges at people. Broadly I am in favour of both the Dragon and the picture (although he seems to be making a suggestion - "How about this?" - rather than threatening anybody) but I do sometimes wonder why Amethysts got chosen to be the most powerful Gem Dragons. You would have thought Diamond, wouldn't you?

YojimboC

05-31-2008 01:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8943290)

What I need to do is run an Ice Age campaign in which White Dragon-riding Frost Giants have subdued the entire world. That would be just too fantastic for words.

Amen.

JasonK

05-31-2008 01:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8943290)

One thing that always puzzled me when I was a snotty pedantic teenager was that a cone of frost is the least effective breath weapon an animal living in icy conditions could use, because all its main rivals - Frost Giants and the like - would probably be immune or resistant to cold.

Amazing. Somehow, this NEVER occurred to me.

Rock on, noisms.

~ jason

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 01:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr Jack (Post 8935684)

I hate to get all reality on a thread about the 2e monstorous manual, but this doesn't work. What happens is that if

you put an solid object, like a dragon, in front of a bright object, like the desert sky, it looks black.

Unless blue dragons glow.

Naxuul

05-31-2008 01:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943378)
Unless blue dragons glow.

Which given that they're like blazing reptilian batteries, isn't out of the question.;

-Naxuul

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

05-31-2008 01:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943378)
Unless blue dragons glow.

They may reflect light (scales!), but I'm thinking that's not enough.

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 01:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8943386)
Which given that they're like blazing reptilian batteries, isn't out of the question.;

Hmmm... I wonder how many lumens would a blue dragon would have to generate to blend in with a clear desert sky?

JasonK

05-31-2008 01:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Hey, also, question:

I know that this is a long, long book to do a Let's Read on, but I wonder if you couldn't shake up the entries a little for the sake of interest? So much of them focuses on the art and one little detail in the entry that I honestly get a little lost. Maybe it's been too long since I read the MM myself, maybe these details should be obvious, but I sort of want to hear more about what type of adventurers these creatures should fight, what their use in a campaign might be...

I dunno, maybe I'm not making any sense?

~ jason

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 01:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Apologies for the double-post: some quick research indicates that the effective intensity of the mid-day sky at equator is equal to about five hundred foot-candles. Since attenuation is negligible for our purposes, we can consider this to be equivalent to five hundred lumens, or about the same as a 40-watt incandescent bulb (assuming that the dragon is equally luminous over its entire body surface, of course).

So really, our hypothetical glowing blue dragon wouldn't have to glow all that brightly to camouflage itself against the sky.

noisms

05-31-2008 01:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8943412)

Hey, also, question:

I know that this is a long, long book to do a Let's Read on, but I wonder if you couldn't shake up the entries a little for the sake of interest? So much of them focuses on the art and one little detail in the entry that I honestly get a little lost. Maybe it's been too long since I read the MM myself, maybe these details should be obvious, but I sort of want to hear more about what type of adventurers these creatures should fight, what their use in a campaign might be...

I dunno, maybe I'm not making any sense?

~ jason

That does make sense. I'll try to incorporate your suggestions. Definitely usage in a campaign was an aspect I wanted to focus on from the beginning but which has started to get lost in, as you say, the art and little details.

Now there's an idea: A campaign which uses *every single monster* from the MM...

noisms

05-31-2008 01:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943430)

Apologies for the double-post: some quick research indicates that the effective intensity of the mid-day sky at equator is equal to about five hundred foot-candles. Since attenuation is negligible for our purposes, we can consider this to be equivalent to five hundred lumens, or about the same as a 40-watt incandescent bulb (assuming that the dragon is equally luminous over its entire body surface, of course).

So really, our hypothetical glowing blue dragon wouldn't have to glow all that brightly to camouflage itself against the sky.

And there you have it. D&D is scientifically unimpeachable after all!

Now, onto fireballs... ;)

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 01:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8943442)

And there you have it. D&D is scientifically unimpeachable after all!

Now, onto fireballs... ;)

I'd have to bust out the alternative physics for that one. Would you prefer cold fusion or zero-point energy? :D

Naxuul

05-31-2008 01:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943430)

Apologies for the double-post: some quick research indicates that the effective intensity of the mid-day sky at equator is equal to about five hundred foot-candles. Since attenuation is negligible for our purposes, we can consider this to be equivalent to five hundred lumens, or about the same as a 40-watt incandescent bulb (assuming that the dragon is equally luminous over its entire body surface, of course).

So really, our hypothetical glowing blue dragon wouldn't have to glow all that brightly to camouflage itself against the sky.

So is answered the immortal question 'How many blue dragons does it take to screw in a light bulb?':D

-Naxuul

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 02:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8943447)

So is answered the immortal question 'How many blue dragons does it take to screw in a light bulb?':D

Heh. Seriously, tho', I just like to play with setting details. The stuff you come up with by extrapolating the logical consequences of the weird little details is often **far** more interesting than anything you could have come up with on your own.

Like electrically-powered super-predators that radiate in the visible spectrum in order to camouflage themselves against the mid-day sky.

Naxuul

05-31-2008 02:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943453)

*Heh. Seriously, tho', I just like to play with setting details. The stuff you come up with by extrapolating the logical consequences of the weird little details is often **far** more interesting than anything you could have come up with on your own.*

Like electrically-powered super-predators that radiate in the visible spectrum in order to camouflage themselves against the mid-day sky.

I wonder then how you would best explain the Green Dragon, a gigantic flying predator who lives in forests too small for itself to actually travel through without destroying the habitat and breathes (and in later editions radiates) enough chlorine gas to kill all plant life it meets. It's a conundrum.;)

-Naxuul

Intermittently Noble

05-31-2008 02:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8933699)

Dragon, Chromatic, Black

The Black Dragon is the goth/emo-kid of the Chromatics: They inhabit "steamy environment[s] where canopies of trees filter out most of the sunlight, swarms of insects fill the air, and stagnant moss-covered ponds lie in abundance." Swamps and jungles, basically, where they lurk under water just waiting for their chance to leap out and shout "Rarr! I'm a black dragon!"

I can just see them composing poetry about the 'dark miasma of my soul, just like the fetid swamp of my flesh' and that sort of thing.

Now we know why they dislike intrusions so much.

Personally, though, I've never liked linking color to abilities. I like to say that the dragons are color-coded for the GM's convenience, not for that of the players. So, my white dragons are really just as likely to melt everyone with fire as they are to freeze fingers off.

Use red dragon's stats, white dragon's body. Have fun.

Blue dragons and light bulb: None. They don't know what the dark is, anyway. Or maybe... one. He commissions an adventurer to do it, then eats the adventurer. In true evil fashion.

David J Prokopetz

05-31-2008 02:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8943463)

I wonder then how you would best explain the Green Dragon, a gigantic flying predator who lives in forests too small for itself to actually travel through without destroying the habitat and breathes (and in later editions radiates) enough chlorine gas to kill all plant life it meets. It's a conundrum.

I'll let someone else field that one - I've had my fun for today.

(Seed of an idea: the sages are wrong. Green dragon "acid" isn't actually chlorine. You see, green dragons aren't animals at all - they're carnivorous **plants**.)

demiurge1138

05-31-2008 03:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I'm not entirely sure why, but I loved goddamn amythest dragons when I first got this book as a kid. Dreamed about 'em and everything.

On the moon. Maybe that means something.

Milk

06-01-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8943290)

What I need to do is run an Ice Age campaign in which White Dragon-riding Frost Giants have subdued the entire world. That would be just too fantastic for words.

Sounds like the source of a fantasy Ice Age.

Rasmus Wagner

06-01-2008 03:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 8943463)

I wonder then how you would best explain the Green Dragon, a gigantic flying predator who lives in forests too small for itself to actually travel through without destroying the habitat and breathes (and in later editions radiates) enough chlorine gas to kill all plant life it meets. It's a conundrum.;

-Naxuul

Because they really, really *hate* trees?

Ashikaider

06-01-2008 04:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8943515)

I'll let someone else field that one - I've had my fun for today.

*(Seed of an idea: the sages are wrong. Green dragon "acid" isn't actually chlorine. You see, green dragons aren't animals at all - they're carnivorous **plants**.)*

that sounds like the Forest Dragon boss from Final Fantasy 12:D

Pete Whalley

06-01-2008 06:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rasmus Wagner (Post 8944920)
Because they really, really hate trees?

And therein lies the hook, perhaps?

The settlements along the edge of a vast forest come under attack by crazed animals forced out of their habitat due to it's slow poisonous death. Local druids are shitting themselves, and the fey (Dryads, Treants and such) are dying along with the forest.

The kingdoms economy suffers as the loggers, furriers and hunters are too scared to enter the forest. What's needed is a band of homicidally courageous hero-types to delve into the wooded depths and kill the green bastard responsible.

Eel

06-01-2008 06:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8934522)
Even herbivores must secretly love a bit of eel.

This is more true than you'd expect.

I might just sig this.

...

What?

(un)reason

06-01-2008 07:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rasmus Wagner (Post 8944920)
Because they really, really hate trees?

Note that their scales remain flexible, unlike other dragons. Maybe they're like mice and octopi, with flexible bodies able to squeeze through ridiculously small gaps without breaking the trees.

noisms

06-01-2008 10:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This thread is made up of a million ridiculous but brilliant ideas. It should be distilled through recondite processes until it resembles pure ether, which all apprentice DMs will be forced to inhale - thus immeasurably bettering the hobby; nay, the WORLD.

Dragon, Gem, Crystal

The Crystal Dragon is one of two (I think) Chaotic Neutral Dragons and therefore probably in the top 10 most powerful Chaotic Neutral creatures ever. (The others being Topaz Dragons, Slaad, and Big Bad Githzerai.) It is the Stephen Fry of Dragonhood, being heavily into intellectual conversation and disdainful of getting its claws dirty.

My immediate thought on reading the entry was to use a Crystal Dragon as a kind of font of collected knowledge in a campaign. Having lived for centuries and conversed with just about every race of thing under the sun, it will have become a trivia expert of Oracular proportions - a kind of Dragon Rainman without the associated emotional dysfunction - able to answer any question put to it with lightning speed. "Where can we find the key to the Golden Temple?" "Where the Blood River meets its source." "When will Orcus return from the dead?" "When the clocks strike 13." Etc. Obviously finding the Crystal Dragon Oracle would be difficult enough in itself - he would live on the top of an Everest-scale mountain, conveniently overrun by hideous monsters. And as he would be Chaotic Neutral, you would only be able to trust his pronouncements half of the time.

Then I got to the bottom paragraph and found out that Crystal Dragons often adopt young White Dragons and teach them "to be friendly." Even better: the Crystal Dragon Oracle has a gang of White Dragon minions/bodyguards who bring interesting humanoids from all over the known world for him to chat with. Often they do this by force, polymorphing into humanoid beings so they can get close to highly knowledgeable folk, then abducting them and bringing them to the mountain top. Of course, they return them afterwards - usually in one piece. And hey presto! The campaign begins with the players meeting a half-mad Sage claiming he was abducted by dragons. As if! But he has proof...

Dragon, Gem, Emerald

Emerald Dragons are the most miserly and parsimonious of Dragonkind. They just do not like people getting their grubby mitts on even the tiniest copper coin from their hoard. Living in volcanoes, they shut themselves away from the world behind elaborate alarm systems. As they get older they gain the ability to cast *geas* once a day, which isn't bad. I like the word 'geas'. Geas.

In comparison to the Crystal Dragon, the Emerald Dragon's entry is plot hook-lite. They don't like Fire Giants, and they're paranoid about their treasure. That's mostly it, although the entry makes passing mention that Emeralds are scared of Reds coming and stealing their treasure. I suppose that could be worked into a campaign somehow.

Another idea that strikes me is having adventurers completely accidentally end up pocketing just one or two coins from an Emerald Dragon's hoard while exploring an ancient volcano, thereby incurring its wrath.

demiurge1138

06-01-2008 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8945997)

Emerald Dragons are the most miserly and parsimonious of Dragonkind. They just do not like people getting their grubby mitts on even the tiniest copper coin from their hoard. Living in volcanoes, they shut themselves away from the world behind elaborate alarm systems. As they get older they gain the ability to cast geas once a day, which isn't bad. I like the word 'geas'. Geas.

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I dunno. Geas as a spell is laden with plot hooks, because it's the "make adventurers run your errands, or waste away and die" spell. Like, the emerald dragon geases a bunch of lower-level PCs to do his dirty work, and so they have to plot how to work around the geas to break the spell and get their grim revenge. The "dirty work" in question would probably have to do with tracking down each individual copper from a nest egg the emerald dragon had stolen from it.

noisms

06-01-2008 05:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 8946874)

I dunno. Geas as a spell is laden with plot hooks, because it's the "make adventurers run your errands, or waste away and die" spell. Like, the emerald dragon geases a bunch of lower-level PCs to do his dirty work, and so they have to plot how to work around the geas to break the spell and get their grim revenge. The "dirty work" in question would probably have to do with tracking down each individual copper from a nest egg the emerald dragon had stolen from it.

Yep, that works. That definitely works.

There would have to be some shenanigans, because I think you can only *geas* one person at a time, and the dragon can only use the spell once a day, so... Maybe he would hold them captive and *geas* one every morning until the whole lot are sorted.

demiurge1138

06-01-2008 06:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8946909)

Yep, that works. That definitely works.

There would have to be some shenanigans, because I think you can only geas one person at a time, and the dragon can only use the spell once a day, so... Maybe he would hold them captive and geas one every morning until the

whole lot are sorted.

For a good aligned group, having one of their own wasting away would probably be enough motivation to be the dragon's minions for a while.

Either that, or the dragon geases one of the party's allies/friends/family members into doing something impossible, dangerous or humiliating unless the PCs cooperate.

noisms

06-02-2008 08:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragon, Gem, Sapphire

I always felt there was something highly unusual about the Sapphire Dragon picture. What exactly is he doing? Standing on his tail? I'd welcome suggestions.

Sapphires are militant, snobbish, high-falutin' lawful neutral types, who don't like drow or dwarves. Well, who does? is the inevitable response. They also love a bit of giant spider - and, really, who doesn't? is the also inevitable response. They breathe an inaudible cone of sound (!) which kicks you arse and also makes you *afraid* - even if you are immune to fear. That's how scary inaudible sounds are.

One thing I always forget is that Gem and Metallic Dragons have access to Priest spells as well as Wizard ones. I think the TSR creators missed a trick in not having any Dragon Proxies in the *Planescape* campaign setting. Imagine a Sapphire Dragon Proxy of Wee Jas wandering the multiverse, smiting stuff. That would be "made of awesome and win", as I believe the kids say these days. Yeah, respec'. Bo selecta.

Dragon, Gem, Topaz

I'll let you in on a strange secret that I've never told anyone before. Topaz Dragons are my favourite kind.

Partly it's to do with the weirdness. Why *Topaz*? I don't think I even know what Topaz *is*. (I just looked it up on Wikipedia; it's brownie yellow.) Partly it's because they live in coastal areas, and I'm a big fan of coastal areas - I love the idea of adventures in inaccessible cliffs and rocky outcroppings. Mostly it's because they're unfriendly and selfish, and I'm unfriendly and selfish.

A campaign I'd like to run is one where a cult of ignorant backwards Crabmen have begun to worshipping a local Topaz Dragon who has taken to sunning himself on a cliff near where they live. They bring him their babies as sacrifices (they don't mind; they give birth to thousands every year) and in return he goes and beats up the local Sahuagin every so often with his psionics and cones of dehydration. Then some innocent fishermen happen to kill and eat some Crabmen...but it make the Topaz Dragon very, very angry. (Not because he likes the Crabmen, but if humans go around eating them it means less baby crabs for him to eat.)

Mr Jack

06-02-2008 08:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

They breathe an inaudible cone of sound (!) which kicks your arse and also makes you afraid - even if you are immune to fear. That's how scary inaudible sounds are.

Don't mock it. Low frequency sounds are one of the things the US military tried out when it was developing non lethal weaponry.

Malignant Marionette

06-02-2008 11:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8950346)

I always felt there was something highly unusual about the Sapphire Dragon picture. What exactly is he doing? Standing on his tail? I'd welcome suggestions.

He's practicing his crane stance, obviously. Don't disrespect it, you don't want to end up in a kung fu fight against a dragon.

DMH

06-03-2008 02:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Look at the sapphire's breath weapon- it about the only realistic sonic effect (in terms of shape) in the game.

How does one create a cone of sound?

Lugh

06-03-2008 02:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8951724)

Look at the sapphire's breath weapon- it about the only realistic sonic effect (in terms of shape) in the game.

How does one create a cone of sound?

Er, don't most speakers create a cone of sound? That's certainly always the way they look on the diagrams. And, that's more or less in line with my (decidedly less than expert) experience. You get a lot less effect from behind a speaker than from in front of it.

Belchion

06-03-2008 03:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 8950786)

He's practicing his crane stance, obviously. Don't disrespect it, you don't want to end up in a kung fu fight against a dragon.

My grasshopper style is way better than his dragon style!

Now, that is an idea - the characters are member of kung fu schools and their masters are defeated by some mysterious stranger. They have to defeat him - just to find out it is a transformed dragon. Who will prevail - kung fu or sonic blasts?

Intermittently Noble

06-03-2008 04:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8951757)

Er, don't most speakers create a cone of sound? That's certainly always the way they look on the diagrams.

High frequencies generate a cone of sound. Low frequencies generate a ball of sound. So if the effect is so low as to be inaudible, then it should be a simple area effect like fireball. If it's so high as to be inaudible, it should be a cone of sound. If it's some sort of extremely high-pitched SASER, then it should be a line of sound.

Make sense?

Weltenbummler

06-03-2008 05:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Intermittently Noble (Post 8952308)

High frequencies generate a cone of sound. Low frequencies generate a ball of sound. So if the effect is so low as to be inaudible, then it should be a simple area effect like fireball. If it's so high as to be inaudible, it should be a cone of sound. If it's some sort of extremely high-pitched SASER, then it should be a line of sound.

Make sense?

What's better than cybernetic ninja bears with LASERS?

It's militant kung-fu dragons with SASERS!!!!!!

noisms

06-03-2008 01:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8952490)
What's better than cybernetic ninja bears with LASERS?

It's militant kung-fu dragons with SASERS!!!!!!

Those World of Synnibarr people really missed a trick, didn't they?

Kaiten

06-03-2008 02:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8950346)
[u]

Dragon, Gem, Topaz

A campaign I'd like to run is one where a cult of ignorant backwards Crabmen have begun to worshipping a local Topaz Dragon who has taken to sunning himself on a cliff near where they live. They bring him their babies as sacrifices (they don't mind; they give birth to thousands every year) and in return he goes and beats up the local Sahuagin every so often with his psionics and cones of dehydration. Then some innocent fishermen happen to kill an eat some Crabmen...but it make the Topaz Dragon very, very angry. (Not because he likes the Crabmen, but if humans go around eating them it means less baby crabs for him to eat.)

Uh, I think Topaz are my favorite now too. That's an awesome idea.

(un)reason

06-03-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8950346)

Dragon, Gem, Topaz

I'll let you in on a strange secret that I've never told anyone before. Topaz Dragons are my favourite kind.

Partly it's to do with the weirdness. Why Topaz? I don't think I even know what Topaz is. (I just looked it up on Wikipedia; it's brownie yellow.) Partly it's because they live in coastal areas, and I'm a big fan of coastal areas - I love the idea of adventures in inaccessible cliffs and rocky outcroppings. Mostly it's because they're unfriendly and selfish, and I'm unfriendly and selfish.

A campaign I'd like to run is one where a cult of ignorant backwards Crabmen have begun to worshipping a local Topaz Dragon who has taken to sunning himself on a cliff near where they live. They bring him their babies as sacrifices (they don't mind; they give birth to thousands every year) and in return he goes and beats up the local Sahuagin every so often with his psionics and cones of dehydration. Then some innocent fishermen happen to kill and eat some Crabmen...but it make the Topaz Dragon very, very angry. (Not because he likes the Crabmen, but if humans go around eating them it means less baby crabs for him to eat.)

Topaz dragons are great. Most neutral dragons feel like the good dragons, only less likely to kill you if you do something evil. They seem more likely to dispense cryptic wisdom than actually do anything dangerous from the way they're described. Topaz dragons are cranky pains in the ass to deal with, while not actually being bad guys. And their breath weapon is brutal. That strength draining'll knock most fighter types down in effectiveness hugely even if they save. It lets them punch above their weight in the killing stakes, because ability damage was so much harder to deal with back then.

DMH

06-03-2008 08:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Crap, I meant the emerald having the sphere of sound, not the sapphire.

I like the topaz for large lakes as well. If some annoying fishing fleet shows up, the dragon can simply ground the boat at port or over shallows with its breath weapon (which is then damaged by the water rushing into the void).

Deadmanwalking

06-03-2008 08:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I'm aware both of these are a bit late, but I'm indulging my pedantic tendencies today, as well as catching up on the thread:

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

Dolphin

Dolphins are not Lawful Good, and nor do they have an Intelligence of 11-12. They really don't, PETA girl. They are animals with slightly above-average intelligence who like to make clicky noises.

Um, I'm about as far from PETA as possible, but this is untrue. While certainly not Lawful Good (they have rape gangs, for God's sake*) there is a great deal of evidence that dolphins are at *at least* Great Ape level intelligence, if not at human level intellect. They have language, and have displayed an understanding of syntax, recognize

their own reflections, and are otherwise demonstrably really damn smart. "Very" might be stretching it, but not by *that* much.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8917932)

[It is not the case that "More than one ship owes its safe arrival in port to the timely intercession and warning of Dolphins." Nor in fact is it the case that one ship does.]

In real life? Of course not. But it's not ridiculously unbelievable as compared to Crocodiles in the sewers...

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8925359)

Really, doppelgangers can only sensibly work by targetting NPC's, since I don't see any player responding too well to a DM note that reads, "you're dead, play along."

I'm actually doing almost exactly this in a Delta Green game right now. Well, I'm more possessed than dead in that one, but still. I'd play along in a heartbeat (especially in Ressurrection-happy D&D), and I doubt I'm alone in that.

*Yes, really. They behave disturbingly humanly in a lot of ways. Which actually adds to the case for their intelligence.

noisms

06-03-2008 08:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8955103)

Um, I'm about as far from PETA as possible, but this is untrue. While certainly not Lawful Good (they have rape gangs, for God's sake) there is a great deal of evidence that dolphins are at least Great Ape level intelligence, if not at human level intellect. They have language, and have displayed an understanding of syntax, recognize their own reflections, and are otherwise demonstrably really damn smart. "Very" might be stretching it, but not by that much.*

But "very" intelligent (11-12) on the AD&D scale means *more intelligent than an average human*! That's just crazy. Most animals have an intelligence of 1 according to the MM; I think giving dolphins a 2-4 would be reasonable, or at most a 5-7 for particular geniuses amongst them. (Don't forget rats can recognise faces, cuttlefish have language and crows can use tools, and I'm not sure anybody would give them an intelligence of 11 or 12!)

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8955103)

Um, I'm about as far from PETA as possible, but this is untrue. While certainly not Lawful Good (they have rape gangs, for God's sake)*

**Yes, really. They behave disturbingly humanly in alot of ways. Which actually adds to the case for their intelligence.*

**shrug*.. It's a common thing among horses and cattle aswell to box in a mare/cow from two sides to give a third stallion/bull a chance to... ya know.*

Not sure if thats a sign of intelligence (or any indication to unicorn or gorgon mating)

Deadmanwalking

06-03-2008 09:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8955127)

But "very" intelligent (11-12) on the AD&D scale means more intelligent than an average human! That's just crazy. Most animals have an intelligence of 1 according to the MM; I think giving dolphins a 2-4 would be reasonable, or at most a 5-7 for particular geniuses amongst them. (Don't forget rats can recognise faces, cuttlefish have language and crows can use tools, and I'm not sure anybody would give them an intelligence of 11 or 12!)

Professional Intelligence researchers are still debating, but evidence seems to be piling up that they really are of near-human, or even full human intellect. Average Intelligence wouldn't be a stretch. I'm not really arguing that the description doesn't pretty them up alot more than it should, but it's not as bad as you were making it out to be.

Also, I'm a Psych student who just finished a class on Comparative (re: animal) Psychology and an obsessive-compulsive pedant.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8955261)

**shrug*.. It's a common thing among horses and cattle aswell to box in a mare/cow from two sides to give a third stallion/bull a chance to... ya know.*

Not sure if thats a sign of intelligence (or any indication to unicorn or gorgon mating)

I was referring to their human-like behavior in general, not that specific instance, but I can see where the

statement would've been confusing...

Lugh

06-03-2008 10:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8955294)

Professional Intelligence researchers are still debating, but evidence seems to be piling up that they really are of near-human, or even full human intellect. Average Intelligence wouldn't be a stretch. I'm not really arguing that the description doesn't pretty them up alot more than it should, but it's not as bad as you were making it out to be.

So, with the proper training, and some way to breach the language barrier, a dolphin could work at Burger King? Because, honestly, that's my definition of Int 10. You are capable of working the register at Burger King (or other fast food restaurant). Int 8 is the Goodwill shadow jobs, sweeping the floors. While I do agree that dolphins are human-level under certain definitions, I don't, for instance, consider them capable of being mages (which an 11 Int would certainly allow).

kelvingreen

06-03-2008 10:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8955485)

While I do agree that dolphins are human-level under certain definitions, I don't, for instance, consider them capable of being mages.

But dolphin mages would be brilliant. That's enough fo a reason to allow it, right there.

noisms

06-03-2008 10:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8955499)

But dolphin mages would be brilliant. That's enough fo a reason to allow it, right there.

Dolphin mages would be kind of cool.

Clearly what D&D needs is INTELLIGENT ANIMAL variants, a la *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Just think of the possibilities! Bald Eagle Druids. Chimpanzee Bards. Sperm Whale Mages. Elephant Paladins. Tiger Priests. This needs to be done.

Deadmanwalking

06-03-2008 10:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8955485)

So, with the proper training, and some way to breach the language barrier, a dolphin could work at Burger King? Because, honestly, that's my definition of Int 10. You are capable of working the register at Burger King (or other fast food restaurant). Int 8 is the Goodwill shadow jobs, sweeping the floors. While I do agree that dolphins are human-level under certain definitions, I don't, for instance, consider them capable of being mages (which an 11 Int would certainly allow).

Well, animal intelligences vary every bit as much as human ones*, so an "Average" score would indicate about the same range of intellects as humans. Which is what I'd be inclined to consider them to have. A +0 racial Int mod, so to speak. And in a fantasy setting, I see no reason they wouldn't have Mages (though what they'd do for spell books I have no idea). They don't have hands, hence the lack of tool use and technology, but the evidence seems to support a fair bit of intellect.

*Obviously, in D&D that's not quite true in terms of actual score, but I'd put that down to the differences between a smart chipmunk and a stupid one not mattering at all to those with human level Int.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8955511)

Dolphin mages would be kind of cool.

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Just think of the possibilities! Bald Eagle Druids. Chimpanzee Bards. Sperm Whale Mages. Elephant Paladins. Tiger Priests. This needs to be done.

Yes. Yes it does. Mechanics would be a bit tricky, but by no means unworkable...

Kapten

06-03-2008 10:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 8955541)

Well, animal intelligences vary every bit as much as human ones, so an "Average" score would indicate about the same range of intellects as humans. Which is what I'd be inclined to consider them to have. A +0 racial Int mod, so to speak. And in a fantasy setting, I see no reason they wouldn't have Mages (though what they'd do for spell books I have no idea). They don't have hands, hence the lack of tool use and technology, but the evidence seems to support*

fair bit of intellect.

**Obviously, in D&D that's not quite true in terms of actual score, but I'd put that down to the differences between a smart chipmunk and a stupid one not mattering at all to those with human level Int.*

Yes. Yes it does. Mechanics would be a bit tricky, but by no means unworkable...

Sorry for the threadjack, but what instrument is used to measure animal intelligence? Especially vs human intelligence?

Kapten

06-03-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8955511)
Dolphin mages would be kind of cool.

Clearly what D&D needs is INTELLIGENT ANIMAL variants, a la Chronicles of Narnia.

Just think of the possibilities! Bald Eagle Druids. Chimpanzee Bards. Sperm Whale Mages. Elephant Paladins. Tiger Priests. This needs to be done.

I will introduce a sperm whale archmage to my campaign! It fits perfectly with the old and powerful creature. It's the perfect GMPC, powerful enough to be the wise old wizard but logistically constrained from interfering in the PCs' business.

Whitemagebishieboy

06-03-2008 11:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8955511)
Chimpanzee Bards.

This is different from human bards how?
More fur?

Deadmanwalking

06-03-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 8955569)

Sorry for the threadjack, but what instrument is used to measure animal intelligence? Especially vs human intelligence?

Various analytical, problem solving, and language recognition tests, that can be performed by both the creature in question and a human being. It's obviously not perfect, but until we figure out a way to speak to them directly...

Mark Krawec

06-03-2008 11:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8955595)

*This is different from human bards how?
More fur?*

No vocalists (unless you count yodelling). Plus they can't dance worth a damn with those stumpy little bow legs. On the other hand, they're bad mutha drummers. Plus their arms are so long they can reach from one end of a spinnet keyboard to the other.

kelvingreen

06-04-2008 02:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8955511)

Dolphin mages would be kind of cool.

Clearly what D&D needs is INTELLIGENT ANIMAL variants

With all the templates flying around in 3.X, I'm surprised these didn't make the cut. I'd play an elephant paladin.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8955595)

*This is different from human bards how?
More fur?*

More fur and better rhythm.

R-90-2

06-04-2008 02:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8956695)

With all the templates flying around in 3.X, I'm surprised these didn't make the cut. I'd play an elephant paladin.

Awaken

Transmutation

Level: Drd 5

Components: V, S, DF, XP

Casting Time: 24 hours

Range: Touch

Target: Animal or tree touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You awaken a tree or animal to humanlike sentience. To succeed, you must make a Will save (DC 10 + the animal's current HD, or the HD the tree will have once awakened).

The awakened animal or tree is friendly toward you. You have no special empathy or connection with a creature you awaken, although it serves you in specific tasks or endeavors if you communicate your desires to it.

An awakened tree has characteristics as if it were an animated object, except that it gains the plant type and its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores are each 3d6. An awakened plant gains the ability to move its limbs, roots, vines, creepers, and so forth, and it has senses similar to a human's.

An awakened animal gets 3d6 Intelligence, +1d3 Charisma, and +2 HD. Its type becomes magical beast (augmented animal). An awakened animal can't serve as an animal companion, familiar, or special mount.

An awakened tree or animal can speak one language that you know, plus one additional language that you know per point of Intelligence bonus (if any).

XP Cost

250 XP.

From the D20 SRD.

Sleeper

06-04-2008 05:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Totally off topic for no good reason whatsoever... :)

Hollyphaunt CR 12

Elite awakened Indian elephant paladin 4

LG Huge magical beast (augmented animal)

Init -1; **Senses** *detect evil*, low-light vision, scent; Listen +16, Spot +14

Languages Common

AC 21, touch 7, flat-footed 23 (-2 size, +7 natural, +7 armor)

hp 186 (17 HD)

Immune disease, fear

Fort +20, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +22 (2d6+11) and 2 stamps +17 (2d6+5)

Melee gore +22 (2d8+16)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +32

Atk Options smite evil (1/day, +2 atk/+4 dmg)

Special Actions trample 2d8+16 (Reflex half DC 26), turn undead (5/day, +2/+3 dmg)

Spells (CL 2)

1st--*divine favor*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4)

At will--*detect evil*

Abilities Str 32, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 14

SQ aura of courage (+4 morale bonus/10 ft. radius), aura of good (moderate), divine grace, lay on hands (8 hp/day)

Feats Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Listen), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Listen +16, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14

Possessions masterwork huge nonhumanoid half-plate, 450 gp

noisms

06-04-2008 12:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

And so we come to the good-guys...

Dragon, Metallic, Brass

Brass dragons are the weakest of the good dragons, pretty much. Their breath weapon is nothing like as powerful or damaging as some of the others'. They're also the most annoying - sort of like the guy in the office who won't stop rambling on once he's got you in a corner; the dragon will even go so far as to cast spells on you to make you talk to it. You could find yourself *slept* and waking up buried to the neck in sand until you've had a proper conversation with the beast. I think that's quite an interesting touch, actually. It's rare to see it acknowledged that being Good doesn't mean being Nice, Fun or Friendly.

Brass dragons are also perpetually bullied by Blues. They're eternal rivals, but a Brass' power doesn't really equal a Blue's. Probably their camouflage is better, though. As we already know, Blue dragons have luminescent scales which allow them to remain unseen against the desert sky, but Brass' are yellowy brown and so they win the Dragon Camouflage Award, Desert Section, most years.

I like the Brass dragon picture - it reminds me of a *Dimetredon* - but it patently wouldn't be able to fly unless those wings are capable of beating literally thousands of times per second.

Dragon, Metallic, Bronze

Another coastal creature for my nascent Topaz Dragon/Crabmen/Sahuagin campaign idea that will never get run, Bronze dragons are hard bastards, what with two breath weapons (lightning and *repulsion*) and a lot of magic. It seems rather unfair that most of the good dragons get two breath weapons when the evil and neutral ones only get one (and more spells too). That tendency existed quite a lot in 2nd edition - there were lots of powerful evil creatures, but at the end of the day there was always an ever more powerful good being just around the corner. Part of the cloying morality that was an unfortunate reaction against the whole Devil Worship thing.

Bronze Dragons like plundering shipwrecks, which doesn't sound like a very Lawful Good thing to do, but it gives me an idea for an adventure in which a famous heirloom of the king has been lost at sea and taken by a Bronze Dragon, and the PCs have to see if they can persuade the creature to give it back. Needless to say, the dragon would want something in return...

Bronzes also like to polymorph into humanoid shape and live amongst humanoids unobtrusively. There are approximately a hundred billion ways of working that into a campaign, and I'm sure you've already thought of about five just in the course of reading this paragraph.

David J Prokopetz

06-04-2008 02:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8959219)

It seems rather unfair that most of the good dragons get two breath weapons when the evil and neutral ones only get one (and more spells too). That tendency existed quite a lot in 2nd edition - there were lots of powerful evil creatures, but at the end of the day there was always an ever more powerful good being just around the corner. Part of the cloying morality that was an unfortunate reaction against the whole Devil Worship thing.

Of course, it's come full circle these days. What with all the dark-n-gritty settings out there, I find it sort of refreshing to page through a game where good is objectively more powerful than evil.

noisms

06-04-2008 02:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 8959488)

Of course, it's come full circle these days. What with all the dark-n-gritty settings out there, I find it sort of refreshing to page through a game where good is objectively more powerful than evil.

Good point. "Edgy" has got to the stage of being trite, nowadays.

David J Prokopetz

06-04-2008 02:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8959498)
Good point. "Edgy" has got to the stage of being trite, nowadays.

I was finding it trite and overplayed when I was twelve years old - my adolescent power fantasies have always tended more toward "shining paragon of virtue" than "Angsty McTrenchcoat". :p

kelvingreen

06-04-2008 05:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 8957737)
Totally off topic for no good reason whatsoever... :)

Hollyphaunt CR 12

Surely that should be "*Holyphaunt*"? ;)

That's great. Did you stat this up yourself, or did it come out of a book? Now I want to play an elephant paladin of Ganesh!

noisms

06-04-2008 05:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8959904)
Surely that should be "Holyphaunt"? ;)

That's great. Did you stat this up yourself, or did it come out of a book? Now I want to play an elephant paladin of Ganesh!

Or a Monkey Paladin of that monkey god. Hanuman? My Hindu mythology ain't what it was....

Deadmanwalking

06-04-2008 05:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8959933)

Or a Monkey Paladin of that monkey god. Hanuman? My Hindu mythology ain't what it was....

Hanuman is correct, though he's almost more of a demigod as I understand it...

JRM

06-04-2008 10:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Noism

It seems rather unfair that most of the good dragons get two breath weapons when the evil and neutral ones only get one (and more spells too). That tendency existed quite a lot in 2nd edition - there were lots of powerful evil creatures, but at the end of the day there was always an ever more powerful good being just around the corner. Part of the cloying morality that was an unfortunate reaction against the whole Devil Worship thing.

Although in fairness the most powerful good creatures, Solars and Planetars, date back to 1st edition, as does the metallic dragons' two breath-weapons.

JRM

06-04-2008 10:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper

Hollyphaunt CR 12

Elite awakened Indian elephant paladin 4

That reminds me, I once wrote up a scenario featuring an awakened dire elephant rogue - when one of those sneak-attacks you, you feel it!

noisms

06-04-2008 10:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8960793)

Although in fairness the most powerful good creatures, Solars and Planetars, date back to 1st edition, as does the metallic dragons' two breath-weapons.

That's true. Chalk that up to speaking extemporaneously.

David J Prokopetz

06-04-2008 11:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8960805)

That reminds me, I once wrote up a scenario featuring an awakened dire elephant rogue - when one of those sneak-attacks you, you feel it!

Didn't somebody once crunch the numbers and determine that, due to various quirks of the 3E skill system, elephants make excellent ninjas?

Lugh

06-05-2008 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8959219)

Bronze Dragons like plundering shipwrecks, which doesn't sound like a very Lawful Good thing to do, but it gives me an idea for an adventure in which a famous heirloom of the king has been lost at sea and taken by a Bronze Dragon, and the PCs have to see if they can persuade the creature to give it back. Needless to say, the dragon would want something in return...

I don't know. I see it as the dragon equivalent of a super-vegan. "I won't harm any living being in order to get my sustenance, I will only take what fruit naturally falls from the tree." Or, in dragon terms, I won't kill anyone to get their stuff, I'll only take stuff from people that are killed by other people/natural forces/etc.

noisms

06-05-2008 01:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8961490)

I don't know. I see it as the dragon equivalent of a super-vegan. "I won't harm any living being in order to get my sustenance, I will only take what fruit naturally falls from the tree." Or, in dragon terms, I won't kill anyone to get their stuff, I'll only take stuff from people that are killed by other people/natural forces/etc.

"Finders keepers."

Sleeper

06-05-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8959904)

Surely that should be "Holyphaunt"? ;)

That's great. Did you stat this up yourself, or did it come out of a book? Now I want to play an elephant paladin of Ganesh!

Back in the days of 1E, there was a MM2 creature called the hollyphau?nt, back when all creatures from the Upper Planes were furry and cute. Quite a few differences, but stole the name (which was obviously inspired by "oliphaunt"). :p

I just took the (Indian) elephant and slapped awakened (+2 HD), the elite stat array, 4 levels of paladin (because 5 would give a pokemount... and I wanted to avoid the image of a huge elephant trying to clamber on a large horse), and checked to see if full plate fell within the budget of a level 4 NPC (not when it's huge... but half-plate worked). Simpler than it sounds because the elephant stat block starts pretty sparse.

kelvingreen

06-05-2008 02:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, it's nicely done, and looks playable. I'll see if any of the DMs around my way will let me use it! ;)

sim_james

06-05-2008 12:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 8961676)

Back in the days of 1E, there was a MM2 creature called the hollyphau?nt, back when all creatures from the Upper Planes were furry and cute.

Hollyphants made it into 2nd edition too, with the Planescape Monstrous Compendium II. I was actually

showing my girlfriend some of the "furry and cute" Planescape beasts last night. Man I love sun flies. Happy gnome-faced bugs that fly around singing little songs to themselves.

Hollyphants, baku, malephants... there's a lot of Upper Planar elephant action in Planescape.

noisms

06-05-2008 12:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragon, Metallic, Copper

Copper dragons sound rather like the annoying cousins Brass ones: "incorrigible pranksters, joke tellers and riddlers". They're selfish and greedy too, although I tend to think all dragons should be selfish and greedy at base - even the good ones. It's part of what being a dragon is, no?

Some articles in the MM brush over combat tactics, but others go into considerable detail. The Copper dragon must be up there with the most detailed:

Quote:

"Copper dragons like to taunt and annoy their opponents, hoping they will give up or become angry and act foolishly. Early in an encounter, a copper dragon will jump from one side of an opponent to another, landing on inaccessible or vertical stone surfaces. If there are no such places around a dragon's lair, the dragon will create them ahead of time using stone shape, move earth, and wall of stone. An angry copper dragon will mire its opponents using rock to mud, and will force victims who escape the mud, into it with kicks. Once opponents are trapped in the mud, the dragon will crush them with a wall of stone or snatch them and carry them aloft. When fighting airborne opponents, a dragon will draw its enemies into narrow, stony gorges where it can use its spider climb ability in an attempt to maneuver the enemy into colliding with the walls."

Good stuff. It gives the lie to the idea that earlier editions of AD&D didn't have different tactics for monsters or had oversimplified combat.

I have to admit I never really thought much of the Copper dragon, but re-reading the entry now I can definitely see a niche for a dragon which can cast *shape stone*, *spider climb*, *wall of stone*, *move earth*, and breathe slowness and acid. Its set of powers really compliment each other and make for a very tough fight. Well done, MM writers. Have a gold star.

Dragon, Metallic, Gold

No matter how many times I read *Dragonlance* books and entries in D&D bestiaries, Gold Dragon still says 'Smaug' to me - mainly because of John Howe's wonderful pictures. Golds shouldn't be "wise, judicious and benevolent". They should be the embodiment of greed, jealousy and malice.

Ho hum. The designers seem to have taken a very vaguely Chinese route with the Gold Dragon. Its powers are all to do with luck, blessings, and summonings, and it commonly takes a wingless, snake-like form (as in the picture for the entry). Actually I rather like that direction. If anything it just makes a change from all the other dragons, which outside of the Weirdo section are all pretty similar in size and shape. But it also harks back to a now extremely rarely seen era of more mythological, fairy-tale-based, "enchanted" (in the magical sense) fantasy that still had an influence on the game during the 2nd edition era. You only glimpse it rarely in creatures like Brownies, Sylphs, Dryads, Treants and Gold Dragons, but it is definitely there: it is one of the saddest losses from the game in the years that have passed since 2nd edition.

Web Warlock

06-06-2008 02:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This is a really cool thread.

I just read it all now and enjoyed every bit of it!

Looking forward to more.

Tim

noisms

06-06-2008 10:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Web Warlock (Post 8966560)
This is a really cool thread.

I just read it all now and enjoyed every bit of it!

Looking forward to more.

Tim

I'm glad you enjoyed it. It's highly impressive that you ploughed through the whole lot.

noisms

06-06-2008 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Okay guys, I've well and truly dragonned myself out. I don't know why I ever committed to two per entry. So let's get this sucker finished and move on!

Dragon, Metallic, Silver, And Dragon, Weirdo, Lots

Silver Dragon - the Silver is like a more-Westernized, poor-man's version of the Gold Dragon, or perhaps a good version of the Red. They like to polymorph into humans and form great friendships with them; if you were into that sort of game you could probably get some mileage out of a tragic love affair between a dragon and a PC.

Brown Dragon - the first Weirdo dragon, and it *is* a weird one, looking quite like a wingless crocodilian. Browns form a new prong in the blue-brass rivalry, being hated enemies of the blue dragons themselves. Apparently they "migrated from the desert. Raurin and now frequent much of the wastes in Eastern Mulhorand". And you know what my feelings are on THAT. Grr.

Cloud Dragon - another wingless dragon with a vaguely "Eastern feel"; its breath weapon is a blast of air which works kind of like that bit in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Darth Vader and Luke have their climactic battle and Vader

summons up a force wind. FACT.

Deep Dragon - this is the Drow of dragons, being an evil thing that lives underground. It breathes "flesh corroding" gas. Eww. Deeps like to eat Kuo-Toa. As sashimi, probably.

Mercury Dragon - these live up to their "quicksilver" moniker, being...well, quick and silver. They breathe a beam of light, use *telekinesis*, talk rather a lot, and are "whimsical" (one of those words that all D&D players should fear).

Mist Dragon - another wingless Eastern one which likes to philosophize and ruminate, and probably stroke its moustaches in a thoughtful way. It breathes "scalding vapour". I think the designers were running out of breath-weapon ideas at this point...

Shadow Dragon - ah, the old favourite. Where would D&D be without stupidly powerful dragons which can drain levels with their breath? I tell you, it wouldn't be a D&D I'd be interested in playing.

Steel Dragon - a sage-like, knowledgeable scientist type, the Steel Dragon always offended my sense of pedantry as a kid by being Lawful Neutral (Good). What was that (Good) doing there? Then I got *Planescape* and realised how that could kinda sorta make sense. A bit. Now, what do you do if you're a monster designer and you've run out of dragon breath weapon ideas? Do you a) make it toxic gas? b) make it corrosive gas? or c) make it hot vapour gas? Answers on a post card.

Yellow Dragon - "Although the existence of yellow dragons has long been predicted by sages (based on theories of primary colors), the first specimen was spotted only five or so years ago." There is so much wrong with that introduction, I've lost the will to live. Breath weapon: Scorching air mixed with sand.

And, thank Christ, the dragons are over with. Tomorrow....er.... Dragonnes!

*Kills self.

(un)reason

06-06-2008 06:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8969560)

Okay guys, I've well and truly dragonned myself out. I don't know why I ever committed to two per entry. So let's get this sucker finished and move on!

Dragon, Metallic, Silver, And Dragon, Weirdo, Lots

Silver Dragon - the Silver is like a more-Westernized, poor-man's version of the Gold Dragon, or perhaps a good version of the Red. They like to polymorph into humans and form great friendships with them, if you were into that sort of game you could probably get some mileage out of a tragic love affair between a dragon and a PC.

Yeah, silver dragon mating habits are one of D&D's more interesting quirks. (particularly the fact that they probably produce more half dragons than all the other types put together, especially pre 3rd edition where only naturally polymorphing dragons could interbreed with everything under the sun.) Its another example of how broad the metaphorical umbrella of each alignment can be.

Quote:

And, thank Christ, the dragons are over with. Tomorrow....er.... Dragonnes!

*Kills self.

And dragon turtles and pseudodragons and faerie dragons. :D Thats what you get when they're in the game title.

Oskar Breytenbach

06-06-2008 06:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8969560)

Although the existence of yellow dragons has long been predicted by sages (based on theories of primary colors)

I find that line hilarious. Theory of primary colours indeed! What they probably meant to write was "Players keep asking why there are no yellow dragons, so here you go. Don't blame us if it's rubbish."

noisms

06-06-2008 07:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Oskar Breytenbach (Post 8969666)

I find that line hilarious. Theory of primary colours indeed! What they probably meant to write was "Players keep asking why there are no yellow dragons, so here you go. Don't blame us if it's rubbish."

Precisely. I don't think I saw that line as acceptable even at the age of 11.

DMH

06-06-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I used a shadow dragon in 1st ed and never, ever again will I use anything like it. I came up with a variant that uses a stinger that does damage ala the fang dragon's drain. Players hated it because it could strike from any near by shadow (almost like a boggle). Fun times with that second one.

brianm

06-07-2008 12:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8970316)

I used a shadow dragon in 1st ed and never, ever again will I use anything like it. I came up with a variant that uses a stinger that does damage ala the fang dragon's drain. Players hated it because it could strike from any near by shadow (almost like a boggle). Fun times with that second one.

Yeah, I enjoy using shadow dragons in the game, but as NPCs. Frankly, my players have traditionally gone to great lengths to avoid having to fight dragons. Even in 1e, they could be terribly dangerous opponents, and 2e only made them worse with their tail-slaps and wind-whipping wing attacks.

Quote:

And, thank Christ, the dragons are over with. Tomorrow....er.... Dragonnes!

*Kills self.

ROFLMAO! :D

- Brian

noisms

06-07-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Man, I just read through that last entry and I must have made at least two dozen elementary grammar errors. Blame the onset of brain-stem death caused by dragon overload.

EDIT: I just edited it.

Multi-Pass

06-07-2008 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dare I ask what the brown dragon's breath weapon is?

t@nya

06-07-2008 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Multi-Pass (Post 8971128)
Dare I ask what the brown dragon's breath weapon is?

It's a powerful acid.

R-90-2

06-07-2008 05:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by t@nya (Post 8971144)
It's a powerful acid.

No bonnacons for us, I guess.

noisms

06-07-2008 12:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragon Turtle

There's a rare touch of poetry in the opening paragraph to this entry: "When a dragon turtle surfaces, it is sometimes mistaken for the reflection of the sun or moon on the water. The turtle's rough, deep green shell is much the same color as the deep water the monster favors, and the silver highlights that line the shell are patterned like light dancing on open water." Don't you just love that image? I wonder who wrote the thing.

A Dragon Turtle is pretty much what you'd expect: a mixture between a Dragon and a Turtle which inhabits a large lake or sea, causing all kinds of mischief. It can destroy ships by swimming underneath and rising up to capsize them - but it can also unleash a breath weapon: scalding steam that does 20-120 points of damage.

Adventure Hook, or rather Adventure Hooks: "Mariners of any experience recognize the territorial claims of dragon turtles and will often make extravagant tributes to the turtle controlling areas necessary for safe and speedy trade." I'm thinking either a) the PCs *must* pass through a Dragon Turtle's territory for some reason, and have to think up a suitable tribute, or b) the PCs are captured by pirates and offered up as sacrifices themselves...

We see a welcome return of Monster Corpse Armour in this entry. As you would expect, Dragon Turtle shells make excellent shields which also protect against fire and steam attacks. Given that the shells themselves are 40' in diameter, you could probably equip a miniature army.

Now there's an idea: the Dragon Turtle Band; a mercenary group all armed with Dragon Turtle shell shields which are passed down from generation to generation...

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

06-07-2008 12:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That reminds me of the time I wanted to play a fighter equipped with nothing but "pre-owned" materials. DM at the time said no, unfortunately, so I had to do it myself. Wasn't the same, though. :p

I'd forgotten that my inspiration for it was precisely the fact that the book is *littered* with this stuff. Awesome. :D

demiurge1138

06-07-2008 01:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The last time I was in a game that featured a dragon turtle, the PCs (myself included) killed and ate it, hollowed out its carcass and used its shell as a boat, then threw its baby through the window of a little old lady's house, after she helped us make the boat.

The advantages of a universally chaotic neutral party, I guess. Good times, good times...

Ragnarok_Engine

06-07-2008 02:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8969560)

Yellow Dragon - "Although the existence of yellow dragons has long been predicted by sages (based on theories of primary colors), the first specimen was spotted only five or so years ago." There is so much wrong with that introduction, I've lost the will to live. Breath weapon: Scorching air mixed with sand.

At least that's better than the original iteration of the Yellow Dragon, published in some stupid *Dragon* magazine article. The main thrust of the article was on how different chromatic dragons interbred using the color wheel as a model, so they introduced the Yellow, Orange, and Purple dragons. This version of the Yellow Dragon breathed, I shit you not, *salt*.

Oh, and since the Green Dragon (produced by crossbreeding with Blues) breathes chlorine, *obviously* the Orange Dragon (produced by crossbreeding with Reds) had to breath sodium. **Sodium.**

EDIT: Looking at the D&D Wiki, looks like the offender was *Dragon* #65. Although some assclown though it was a good idea to bring these dracobortions back in the *Draconomicon*.

noisms

06-07-2008 02:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ragnarok_Engine (Post 8973764)

At least that's better than the original iteration of the Yellow Dragon, published in some stupid Dragon magazine article. The main thrust of the article was on how different chromatic dragons interbred using the color wheel as a model, so they introduced the Yellow, Orange, and Purple dragons. This version of the Yellow Dragon breathed, I shit you not, salt.

*Oh, and since the Green Dragon (produced by crossbreeding with Blues) breathes chlorine, obviously the Orange Dragon (produced by crossbreeding with Reds) had to breath sodium. **Sodium.***

EDIT: Looking at the D&D Wiki, looks like the offender was Dragon #65. Although some assclown though it was a good idea to bring these dracobortions back in the Draconomicon.

Orange Dragon? That's just too funny. How do you *breath* Sodium, anyway? That's like breathing iron.

I would have had it breath concentrated citric acid...

g026r

06-07-2008 02:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ragnarok_Engine (Post 8973764)

EDIT: Looking at the D&D Wiki, looks like the offender was Dragon #65. Although some assclown though it was a good idea to bring these dracobortions back in the Draconomicon.

I'm now curious as to how the ones in 65 were different from the ones [the ones in #38](#). I guess that's something to ask (un)reason.

Ragnarok_Engine

06-07-2008 02:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8973794)

Orange Dragon? That's just too funny. How do you breath Sodium, anyway? That's like breathing iron.

I would have had it breath concentrated citric acid...

I don't have access to that *Dragon*, but here's how somebody on ENWorld converted it for 3E before the Draconomicon came out:

Breath Weapon (Su): An orange dragon has one type of breath weapon, a stream of pure liquid sodium. 1/2 damage first round, 1/2 damage second round as per acid. If an attempt is made to wash the sodium off with water, full damage is taken as fire.

If a creature is wet or standing in water, full damage is taken; half as fire, half as acid. In all cases damage is halved if the creature makes it's reflex save.

E.T.Smith

06-07-2008 02:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ragnarok_Engine (Post 8973764)
This version of the Yellow Dragon breathed, I shit you not, salt.

Somewhere in D&D land, an arch-wizard keeps a miniaturized salt-breathing yellow dragon chained to his dinner table solely for mealtime convenience.

noisms

06-07-2008 03:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8973868)
Somewhere in D&D land, an arch-wizard keeps a miniaturized salt-breathing yellow dragon chained to his dinner table solely for mealtime convenience.

Along with a miniaturized version of a rarely seen sub-breed of black dragon.

E.T.Smith

06-07-2008 03:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8973965)
Along with a miniaturized version of a rarely seen sub-breed of black dragon.

I think it should actually called a *Sneeze Dragon*... crap, now I want to stat one up.

Naxuul

06-07-2008 03:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 8973868)

Somewhere in D&D land, an arch-wizard keeps a miniaturized salt-breathing yellow dragon chained to his dinner table solely for mealtime convenience.

He also has his modified Aurumvorax affectionately known as the Spice Weasal.

BAM!

-Naxuul

DMH

06-07-2008 07:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Nothing about the art for the dragon turtle? I think it is the best piece, even if it is just a snapping turtle.

noisms

06-07-2008 07:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8974416)

Nothing about the art for the dragon turtle? I think it is the best piece, even if it is just a snapping turtle.

Oh yeah, it's a good one. But it's DiTerlizzi, so that's expected. I have to say, my favourite is probably the Gnoll. I'm not sure why; it just seems like the perfect Gnoll to me. The Platonic Gnoll, in fact.

Neil Bishop

06-07-2008 08:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8964082)

(snip) ***Dragon, Metallic, Gold*** (snip) *The designers seem to have taken a very vaguely Chinese route with the Gold Dragon. Its powers are all to do with luck, blessings, and summonings, and it commonly takes a wingless, snake-like form (as in the picture for the entry). (snip)*

Actually this is a legacy from Gary Gygax's 1E days. The original monster manual had the gold dragon illustrated as a wingless vaguely oriental dragon and the pseudo-Latin name was *draco orientalis sino dux*.

Great thread, BTW.

Hellzon

06-07-2008 11:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Nethack has yellow* and orange** dragons.

Ah, we're through the Dragon entry. Is the next mega-entry "Elf"? ;)

*) Acid breath

**) Sleeping gas breath

Wakboth

06-08-2008 12:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8969641)

Yeah, silver dragon mating habits are one of D&D's more interesting quirks. (particularly the fact that they probably produce more half dragons than all the other types put together, especially pre 3rd edition where only naturally polymorphing dragons could interbreed with everything under the sun.) Its another example of how broad the metaphorical umbrella of each alignment can be.

"Of all the metallic dragons, silvers spend most of their time polymorphed into different beings, especially humanoids, and are by far the most congenial and friendly towards such creatures. Indeed, some observers (especially copper dragons, who love good gossip) claim they prefer non-draconic shapes entirely, and only settle for draconic mates after a series of doomed relationships with lesser beings. Needless to say, silver dragons are not amused by such scurrilous claims."

-- Bethmoora the Sphinx, "Her Myriad Ways; Or, a Treatise on Love & Procreation Among Various Kinds of Beings. With 48 Woodcut Illustrations!" :D

Wakboth

06-08-2008 12:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8974418)

Oh yeah, it's a good one. But it's DiTerlizzi, so that's expected. I have to say, my favourite is probably the Gnoll. I'm not sure why; it just seems like the perfect Gnoll to me. The Platonic Gnoll, in fact.

The excellent DiTerlizzi gnoll illustration was, I believe, one of the primary influences behind my interest in anthropomorphs. (Also, the werebeasts in the same book. The weretigress... rowr! :p)

noisms

06-08-2008 12:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8974856)

The excellent DiTerlizzi gnoll illustration was, I believe, one of the primary influences behind my interest in anthropomorphs. (Also, the werebeasts in the same book. The weretigress... rowr!:p)

Even more *rowr* is the Cat Goddess thing in the Planescape Monstrous Compendium II.

R-90-2

06-08-2008 12:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8974914)

Even more rowr is the Cat Goddess thing in the Planescape Monstrous Compendium II.

Animal Lord(Cat). And, yes, yes, yes.

YojimboC

06-08-2008 07:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8969560)

Steel Dragon - a sage-like, knowledgeable scientist type, the Steel Dragon always offended my sense of pedantry as a kid by being Lawful Neutral (Good). What was that (Good) doing there? Then I got Planescape and realised how that could kinda sorta make sense. A bit. Now, what do you do if you're a monster designer and you've run out of dragon breath weapon ideas? Do you a) make it toxic gas? b) make it corrosive gas? or c) make it hot vapour gas? Answers on a post card.

Sorry I'm late, but --

Weren't these guys just the Greyhawk dragons under another name?

6inTruder

06-08-2008 07:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8975979)

Weren't these guys just the Greyhawk dragons under another name?

Cloud and Mist I believe?

DMH

06-08-2008 08:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

No, he is right. Steel dragon is the name for the Greyhawk dragon in other settings.

(un)reason

06-08-2008 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 8977655)

No, he is right. Steel dragon is the name for the Greyhawk dragon in other settings.

Almost, The two types have different set of spell-like abilities. They are almost identical otherwise, and specifically noted as having very recent common ancestors. Dragons do do quite a bit of planet hopping, it seems. But then, dragons are so big, rare, have so many subvariants and even one has such a large ecological impact that logically, the ability to do that is necessary to keep them from either going extinct forever when a rash of dragonslayers comes around or messing up the world when there are too many dragons in one place.

noisms

06-08-2008 09:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 8977728)

Almost, The two types have different set of spell-like abilities. They are almost identical otherwise, and specifically noted as having very recent common ancestors. Dragons do do quite a bit of planet hopping, it seems. But then, dragons are so big, rare, have so many subvariants and even one has such a large ecological impact that logically, the ability to do that is necessary to keep them from either going extinct forever when a rash of dragonslayers come around or messing up the world when there are too many dragons in one place.

The "messing up there world when there are too many dragons in one place" idea might be fun for a campaign.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragonet

If I never see another Dragon again I'll be a happy man, so there's no way Dragonets are getting individual entries.

Faerie Dragonet - The picture of the Faerie Dragonet is so camp it's impossible to take the thing seriously - he's even flopping his wrist forward as if about to break into a rendition of "I'm a little tea-pot, short and stout..." For those who aren't familiar, A Faerie Dragonet is a tiny dragon with butterfly wings which likes the dreaded "pranks, mischief and practical jokes" which always (ahem) lighten up a game. *Ventriloquism*, *Animate Rock*, *Distort Distance* and *Forget* are particular favourites. Even its breath weapon, a ball of Euphoria Gas, is guaranteed to cause "humourous" and "amusing" effects. Their giggles sound like silver bells tinkling and they especially enjoy fruit pastries. Yes, you did read that sentence right, and no, I'm not making it up.

Firedrake - The Firedrake is a miniature, dog-sized red dragon, complete with tiny fire breath and burning blood. It is notable chiefly for the latter quality; its blood can be stored and used to make firebombs, or flaming weapons (although the mechanical effects of having a fiery sword are not detailed - I can't remember if they are set out in another book).

Pseudodragon - Another small, benign and playful dragon. They aren't very benign in *Zangband* or *TOME*, though. I remember losing a lot of low-level characters to Pseudodragons. It was about time we had an instakill monster and Pseudodragons are an added bonus in being a pseudoinstakill one - their stings put you into a coma with a flat 25% chance of death. Their eggs are worth 10,000 gps and their babies 20,000 - so they can definitely be an addition to my Egg Thief campaign (see the Bird entry). Not much else to say about them - they find employment chiefly as familiars, and will deliberately seek out human masters. I got a good belly chuckle from the line "If the human seems overjoyed and promises to take very good care of it, the pseudodragon will accept. If not, it will fly away." Well, that would rule me out, then.

We're almost at the finishing line now. Just Dragonnes to go and then we can get onto interesting things like Driders, Drow, Dryads and Dwarfs. 'D' must surely be the most important letter in the MM alphabet.

kelvingreen

06-08-2008 10:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8977775)

The "messaging up there world when there are too many dragons in one place" idea might be fun for a campaign.

That's sort of what the Fifth Age setting in *Dragonlance* described. There were fewer dragons, because some bigger ones came from elsewhere and started cannibalising the others, but these bigger ones then take over the world and start "messaging it up".

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8977915)

...A Faerie Dragonet is a tiny dragon with butterfly wings... its breath weapon, a ball of Euphoria Gas... they

especially enjoy fruit pastries.

So it's basically the Stoner Dragon, complete with hallucinations and munchies.

JRM

06-08-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8977915)

Dragonet

Pseudodragon - Another small, benign and playful dragon. They aren't very benign in Zangband or TOME, though. I remember losing a lot of low-level characters to Pseudodragons. It was about time we had an instakill monster and Pseudodragons are an added bonus in being a pseudoinstakill one - their stings put you into a coma with a flat 25% chance of death. Their eggs are worth 10,000 gps and their babies 20,000 - so they can definitely be an addition to my Egg Thief campaign (see the Bird entry). Not much else to say about them - they find employment chiefly as familiars, and will deliberately seek out human masters. I got a good belly chuckle from the line "If the human seem: overjoyed and promises to take very good care of it, the pseudodragon will accept. If not, it will fly away." Well, that would rule me out, then.

I had a low level elf magic-user/thief with a Pseudodragon familiar once. It was a lot more dangerous than I was - better AC, more hit points, magic resistance, super-stealth ability and a poison sting with a -2 save. My character didn't even have a *Sleep* spell when he started out. Oh, I miss those games...

noisms

06-09-2008 11:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 8978064)

I had a low level elf magic-user/thief with a Pseudodragon familiar once. It was a lot more dangerous than I was - better AC, more hit points, magic resistance, super-stealth ability and a poison sting with a -2 save. My character didn't even have a Sleep spell when he started out. Oh, I miss those games...

That reminds me of a character in my current game, a halfling cleric. He's powerful now, but when he started off he had a pet skunk which was more dangerous than he was.

Chevelle

06-09-2008 09:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This is a fantastic thread Noisms. I quit lurking here after the signal to noise ratio went downhill in the wake of things

like the motivational posters thread. Now I'm kicking myself. This thread is full of all the best things about this board, creativity, game ideas, information, and nostalgia. Nice work!

I just read the entire thing and I made some notes along the way...

Centaur - I know that Piers Anthony is essentially persona non grata here but his centaurs are the best I've read in fantasy. They're generally interesting, well-developed characters and run from wild crazy injuns to scholars. The other smart thing is that they're the archers. Having a four-legged base would be perfect for handling a bow.

Numanoid's idea for the doppelganger Secret Invasion - brilliant! Sign me up for that game!

Yellow Dragon - The yellow lizard that comes to mind is the beautiful (and sadly critically endangered) Chinese Alligator. I'd make them into the yellow dragon. A lower breed, littoral, it's breath weapon something "realistic" like a jet of water that can stun a water buffalo, and kill a deer or a human. It swims up rivers eats livestock and fishermen, setting traps with a cruel cunning. Being an "Eastern" type of story I'd have the dragon's arrival in the river be seen by the locals as some sort of Karmic consequence, like the original novel *Jaws*. The PCs arrive to help deal with it, and unravel the fishing village's corruption.

zanshin

06-09-2008 11:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Just wanted to say that I shyed away from this thread initially, as my D&D experience was 1e and 3e, so I didnt think it would have the nostalgia value for me of the Dragon/1e DMG threads.

What it is is brilliantly, imaginatively , wittily written. Thank you noisms , a lot.

noisms

06-09-2008 11:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Chevelle (Post 8981717)

Yellow Dragon - The yellow lizard that comes to mind is the beautiful (and sadly critically endangered) Chinese Alligator. I'd make them into the yellow dragon. A lower breed, littoral, it's breath weapon something "realistic" like jet of water that can stun a water buffalo, and kill a deer or a human. It swims up rivers eats livestock and fishermen setting traps with a cruel cunning. Being an "Eastern" type of story I'd have the dragon's arrival in the river be seen by the locals as some sort of Karmic consequence, like the original novel Jaws. The PCs arrive to help deal with it, and unravel the fishing village's corruption.

First post in the thread, and it's already a good one. Keep it up, and thanks for the kind words. ;)

noisms

06-09-2008 11:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by zanshin (Post 8981936)

Just wanted to say that I shyed away from this thread initially, as my D&D experience was 1e and 3e, so I didnt think it would have the nostalgia value for me of the Dragon/1e DMG threads.

What it is is brilliantly, imaginatively , wittily written. Thank you noisms , a lot.

You're welcome, and thanks! Glad you like it. I enjoy writing it (for the most part... ;))

noisms

06-09-2008 11:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dragonne

The Dragonne is quite an odd idea, in my opinion. Is there any reason for the Lion/Dragon combination? It seems a little...uninspired. I'd love to see something like a Rhinoceros-Dragon, or a Bear-Dragon, or a Turtle-Dra....No, wait...

The Dragonne is Yet Another Riff on the venerable line of hybrid monsters, although I much prefer proper mythical ones like Chimeras and Manticores. It's reasonably tough, with reasonably powerful special attacks (a roar which causes *weakness*, deafness and *fear*) and it gives a reasonable amount of experience as a reward. But this is AD&D, dammit! Who wants reasonable when you can have Grossly Unfair!?

The entry also sounds as if it was written by two different people. Probably Zeb Cook wrote the first bit: "Possessing some of the most dangerous qualities of a lion and a brass dragon, the dragonne is a vicious and deadly hunter, and a threat to many who travel in warmer climates." It's a monster, rarr, etc. But then PETA girl finishes off the entry: "Dragonnes are not necessarily aggressive toward strangers, and the creature's reputation as a mindless devourer of helpless travelers is more the product of ignorance than well-researched fact." It's just misunderstood, boo hoo, etc.

Dragonnes give birth to eggs, although unfortunately prices aren't given. Still, egg-thief campaign, baby. Egg-thief campaign.

Wakboth

06-10-2008 12:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always thought dragonnes were somehow based on the Chinese lion dogs. (I don't think I've ever used, or faced, one in any game, either.)

As for the egg-thief campaign, wouldn't the ultimate prize be building a suit of armor from the shards of a roc's eggs? :D

Thranguy

06-10-2008 02:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 8974707)

Nethack has yellow and orange** dragons.*

Ah, we're through the Dragon entry. Is the next mega-entry "Elf"? ;)

No, there's "Dwarf" coming up, followed by "Elemental" before you get to "Elf".

(Then, IIRC, a mega entry for Faeries, then Giants and Golems. The mega-entries are all pretty front-loaded, at least; no many in the later alphabet.)

(Thinking how interminable 'D' is now, remember that in most versions it would have 'Demon', 'Devil', and 'Daemon' in it on top of what it has now.)

6inTruder

06-10-2008 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8982219)

I always thought dragonnes were somehow based on the Chinese lion dogs. (I don't think I've ever used, or faced, on in any game, either.)

Fu/Foo Dogs/Lions. They're in OA(1ed anyway) and the Kara-Tur compendium.

Chevelle

06-10-2008 07:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 8982802)

(Thinking how interminable 'D' is now, remember that in most versions it would have 'Demon', 'Devil', and 'Daemon' in it on top of what it has now.)

Totally. I was just about to post that.

Also, the Dragon Turtle and Dragonne are two of Tramp's best illustrations from the 1st ed MM. Iconic! They'd make great tatoos.

noisms

06-10-2008 09:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8983343)

Fu/Foo Dogs/Lions. They're in OA(1ed anyway) and the Kara-Tur compendium.

They're also in one of the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums (Compendia?), I think. I'm not 100% sure.

Brutus

06-10-2008 10:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8984583)

They're also in one of the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums (Compendia?), I think. I'm not 100% sure.

Definitely, can't remember whether it's in compendium 1 or 2 though. We'd never have this much fun with the planescape creature books though. They're not nearly silly enough.

noisms

06-10-2008 09:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dryad

I like Dryads. For starters, I like their ambiguity; on the one hand they're sexy elf-maidens who want to seduce you, but on the other they're dangerous temptresses who might ensnare you with their magic for ever. On the one hand they're a useful source of information because they know their surroundings intimately and will share it if you're nice, but on the other hand if you're *too* nice you could end up being their "amorous slave" (as the book puts it) for the rest of your years. Secondly, I really like the MM monsters who you aren't supposed to kill and take their stuff. It adds much more depth to both adventures and to the game generally to have creatures who are to be dealt with in more subtle ways.

Basically all a Dryad can do to harm you is to cast her special *Charm* spell, which is more powerful than a regular *charm person*. If your Charisma is 16 or more, watch out - you could end up as one of the aforementioned "amorous slaves", with only a 50% chance of ever being seen again, and even that after 1d4 years have passed. (This is another argument for using Charisma as a dump stat.)

And that's the main plot hook, I suppose, other than the "providing information" shtick. It might be rather fun to have a PC who starts the campaign having literally just escaped from a four year stint as an "amorous slave" of a Dryad. Of course, another angle is to have the PCs trying to rescue somebody from the clutches of Dryads, be it a member of their own party or somebody else. Needless to say, the Dryads might agree to release said somebody, provided that the PCs do something for them in return... like going and killing a local coven of Hags.

JRM

06-11-2008 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8980131)

That reminds me of a character in my current game, a halfling cleric. He's powerful now, but when he started off he had a pet skunk which was more dangerous than he was.

Bah, that familiar **stinks** in comparison to my character's!:)

JasonK

06-11-2008 02:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8986318)

It might be rather fun to have a PC who starts the campaign having literally just escaped from a four year stint as an "amorous slave" of a Dryad.

Brilliant!

Quote:

Of course, another angle is to have the PCs trying to rescue somebody from the clutches of Dryads, be it a a membe of their own party or somebody else. Needless to say, the Dryads might agree to release said somebody, provided that the PCs do something for them in return... like going and killing a local coven of Hags.

Also cool, yeah, as long as you make it obvious to the players that killing the dryad or chopping down her tree is a sure way of trapping the rescued. Otherwise...

~ jason

Wakboth

06-11-2008 03:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8986318)

It might be rather fun to have a PC who starts the campaign having literally just escaped from a four year stint as an "amorous slave" of a Dryad.

"Going into the dungeons, where there are no trees or plants, with a bunch of hairy dwarves, smelly half-orcs and weedy wizards, with not a woman in sight? Sign me iup, quick!" :D

Whitemagebishieboy

06-11-2008 07:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8986318)
[u]"amorous slave"

Dryads are CG aren't they? What are CG critters doing with love slaves?

Sleeper

06-11-2008 08:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8988782)
Dryads are CG aren't they? What are CG critters doing with love slaves?

Assauging their guilt with lots of sex.

The alignment system isn't so absolute that good girls can't do bad things. And it's easy to rationalize. After all, she's taking really good care of him. And he really, really, doesn't seem to mind. Or maybe the average dryad just assumes it's her own natural allure, and doesn't realize it's magically-enhanced. Which might cause her to undergo a major moral crisis when the truth is exposed.

see

06-11-2008 10:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 8988782)
Dryads are CG aren't they? What are CG critters doing with love slaves?

They're CG in 3e, but they were Neutral in the 2e Monstrous Manual.

noisms

06-11-2008 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

It's funny how alignments migrate across the editions like that. The clearest example for me is Orcs. They were Lawful Evil in 2nd edition, but suddenly became Chaotic Evil in 3rd.

demiurge1138

06-11-2008 12:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 8989466)
They're CG in 3e, but they were Neutral in the 2e Monstrous Manual.

And there was a movement towards the end of 3e to bring them back into neutrality. The Monster Manual V featured the "verdant reaver", a plant-y gorilla thing. When a dryad keeps a charmed love slave for too long, the mortal turns into a nature guardian spirit. The entry said that good dryads rotated their lovers out to prevent such a fate, evil ones purposefully created these reavers, and neutral ones either created them as a punishment for mortals who deserved it or just because they forget.

Now that's got some good plot hooks in it.

noisms

06-11-2008 04:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dwarf

Is there much to say about Dwarves than you already know? Probably not. I like them, though. "Dwarf Fighter" is pretty much my favourite race/class combination in D&D, although these days I try to do something a little different with them (like basing their culture on the quasi-Babylonian shtick that Warhammer Chaos Dwarfs had, or making them the dominant race in the world, or such like). I'm not a big fan of the monoculturalism though. I'd like to see a campaign setting with properly developed, and interesting/different Dwarven (and Elven) societies.

Hmm....reading through the entry, what stands out and makes me go, "Oh, well I never"?

- Dwarves use bears and wolves as guards, sometimes. I'd forgotten about that.
- "A dwarven clan not already attached to a city or mine travels until it finds an outpost where it can begin to ply a trade." That's usable, in a rather low-grade sort of way. Traveling dwarves clan moves into the area, causes trouble, PCs have to sort it out, blah blah.
- Dwarven-made things fetch 20% extra when they are sold.
- Mountain dwarves like spears a whole bunch.
- Er, that's it.

I'll do Derro and Duergar in another entry.

kelvingreen

06-11-2008 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8990604)

although these days I try to do something a little different with them (like basing their culture on the quasi-Babylonian shtick that Warhammer Chaos Dwarfs had, or making them the dominant race in the world, or such like)

Tangent! Are the Chaos Dwarves still about in Warhammer canon? Or did they get retconned out between editions? They've always been one of my favourite races from that setting, as they seemed so original and different from all the other stock fantasy goings on. Angry coal-mining dwarves that lived in pyramid-ziggurats, had extensive knowledge of firearms and genetic engineering (didn't they invent Black Orcs as a slave race?), worshipped lammasu and wore really funky hats. I'd love to use them in *WFRP*.

One generic fantasy setting I homebrewed (for *AD&D2*, I think) many years ago had a dominant dwarven nation which used minotaurs as a slave race and generally weren't too nice. I think I may have been influenced by the Chaos Dwarves with that one!

JasonK

06-11-2008 06:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

"Finds an outpost," given the traditional dwarven association with mines, reads to me a little like "clears out a dungeon." Which I guess is a plot-hook or two right there. The PCs are all dwarves who want to clear a dungeon of its monster denizens so that they can take over and set up shop (though, for variety, I suppose they should recruit a human wizard and a halfling thief, first...).

Alternately, the dwarves are npcs and are honestly just skilled craftsmen and they need to hire the PCs to do their dirty work for them. (Which is sort of funny, in a way; the PCs are effectively kicking the monsters out of their natural habitat to make room for a rival species.)

That said, I've never been sold on dwarves as mine-dwelling clannish folk. I'm sure they *have* mines, of course, since they need to get their raw goods from somewhere, and I believe the family impulse would be as strong for them as any other medieval-type society. But, ultimately, I prefer to think of my dwarves as feudal Mountain Kings. I see them living in castles (with towers, crenelations, ramparts, all that stuff) that rise up into the air from the tops of the mountains, almost cut out of the rock. Each castle has a single king or thane, greedy, tricky and steeped in ancient lore. (In my mind, dwarven kings are wiry where their subjects are thick, and break the curve on the dwarven height averages. Plus they can turn into badgers or ravens. I like pushing a little mythology back into my d&d.)

Dwarves will travel, for certain, but only because they're on the road to answer a commission. I see a small team of dwarves, hired to forge a special sword for a human king, one tied to his land and so, of necessity, made there. There's a cart, in the back of which is a runed anvil and all the tools of the dwarves' trade. They move down the long road in winter at a gnomish pace, cloaks pulled tight, only their thick, frost-rimed beards showing. And with them, a guard of honor, yes, the great mountain bears.

(Because of their association with goblins and orcs, I just don't see wolves being good pets to dwarves.)

~ jason

noisms

06-11-2008 06:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Great ideas, guys. Regarding Chaos Dwarves, I don't think they're around any more in the Warhammer canon, but I haven't played the game for something like 10 years so I can't be sure. I loved them, but they were always too expensive for me as a kid - they had no plastic models, only lead ones, as far as I can remember. I loved the Bull Centaurs. They were fantastic.

I remember reading somewhere on the net a person's idea for Dwarves based on Japanese culture. I quite liked that thought, although Japanese culture is way overdone in RPGs. I think Zulus would be a good fit for Dwarves - fierce, proud warriors who place law and order so high that they will literally walk off a cliff if their king commands it.

Lugh

06-11-2008 11:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8990783)
incredible dwarven awesomeness snipped

Hory clap! I think you just revitalized dwarves for my campaign world. Sure, there's nothing revolutionary there. But, just enough touches to give them back some cool points.

Chevelle

06-12-2008 12:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8990783)
"Finds an outpost," given the traditional dwarven association with mines, reads to me a little like "clears out a dungeon." Which I guess is a plot-hook or two right there. The PCs are all dwarves who want to clear a dungeon of it monster denizens so that they can take over and set up shop (though, for variety, I suppose they should recruit a human wizard and a halfling thief, first...).

Alternately, the dwarves are npcs and are honestly just skilled craftsmen and they need to hire the PCs to do their dirty work for them. (Which is sort of funny, in a way; the PCs are effectively kicking the monsters out of their natural habitat to make room for a rival species.)

~ jason

Maybe the best rationale for a dungeon crawl I've ever heard. Throw in some kind of holy relic or magical artifact at the bottom of the mine, and you've got good reason for other-than-dwarves to go a-dungeoneering with the dwarven expedition.

Wakboth

06-12-2008 12:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8990878)

Great ideas, guys. Regarding Chaos Dwarves, I don't think they're around any more in the Warhammer canon, but I haven't played the game for something like 10 years so I can't be sure. I loved them, but they were always too expensive for me as a kid - they had no plastic models, only lead ones, as far as I can remember. I loved the Bull Centaurs. They were fantastic.

I think the Chaos Dwarves haven't been explicitly written out of Warhammer, the way, say, Squats were in 40k. So as far as I know, they're still out there on the Plain of Zharr, with their hordes of hobgoblin slaves. They haven't been given any detail in a while, though.

Dwarves, in general, tend to be a bit under-used race, especially compared to elves. Maybe it's because of the whole "stolid, hard-working, taciturn, suspicious of outsiders" thing...

Kapten

06-12-2008 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8991691)

I think the Chaos Dwarves haven't been explicitly written out of Warhammer, the way, say, Squats were in 40k. So as far as I know, they're still out there on the Plain of Zharr, with their hordes of hobgoblin slaves. They haven't been given any detail in a while, though.

Dwarves, in general, tend to be a bit under-used race, especially compared to elves. Maybe it's because of the whole "stolid, hard-working, taciturn, suspicious of outsiders" thing...

You have to factor in that elves look good while dwarves as a rule are pretty ugly ;)

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

06-12-2008 12:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Hee. Strike the Earth! :D

noisms

06-12-2008 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8991691)

I think the Chaos Dwarves haven't been explicitly written out of Warhammer, the way, say, Squats were in 40k. So as far as I know, they're still out there on the Plain of Zharr, with their hordes of hobgoblin slaves. They haven't been

given any detail in a while, though.

Dwarves, in general, tend to be a bit under-used race, especially compared to elves. Maybe it's because of the whole "stolid, hard-working, taciturn, suspicious of outsiders" thing...

Don't get me started on Dwarves vs. Elves. What I will say is that Dwarves are my favourite non-human race both in D&D and Warhammer, and it's a crying shame that they're so underappreciated. They only ever seem to get the comic relief job, e.g. Gimli in the LOTR films.

Oskar Breytenbach

06-12-2008 01:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I am very fond of dwarfs. Elves make me want to vomit: *especially* the ones in Lord of the Rings.

Dwarfs are practical, technologically advanced, enjoy beer, and have awesome beards. Elves prance through the trees and pretend they are better than everyone else. It's no contest which is better.

JasonK

06-12-2008 02:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8990878)

I remember reading somewhere on the net a person's idea for Dwarves based on Japanese culture. I quite liked that thought, although Japanese culture is way overdone in RPGs. I think Zulus would be a good fit for Dwarves - fierce, proud warriors who place law and order so high that they will literally walk off a cliff if their king commands it.

The Burning Wheel game I'm kinda sorta playing in right now has dwarves that are very Japanese. I thought that Japanese folklore had it's own particular form of dwarf, which might be interesting myths to use as a basis instead of western ones, but I can't now remember what they're called or find word of them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 8991530)

Hory clap! I think you just revitalized dwarves for my campaign world. Sure, there's nothing revolutionary there. But, just enough touches to give them back some cool points.

Thanks. :o It's pretty much the take I went with last time I designed a game world, and for the exact same reason - I wanted to keep dwarves recognizeable, but put some of the cool back into them.

~ jason

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8986318)

Dryad

And that's the main plot hook, I suppose, other than the "providing information" shtick. It might be rather fun to have a PC who starts the campaign having literally just escaped from a four year stint as an "amorous slave" of a Dryad.

It's a simple step from Dryads charming people to keep thier trees from being cut down to organised crime. :) Then the senior members of the Bardic Colleges have the Dryad Mafia remove up and coming new talent thats not singing to the approved songsheet. Some get released years later, but most get passed on to the Rusalka when the Dryads get bored of them...

noisms

06-12-2008 10:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 8992547)

The Burning Wheel game I'm kinda sorta playing in right now has dwarves that are very Japanese. I thought that Japanese folklore had it's own particular form of dwarf, which might be interesting myths to use as a basis instead of western ones, but I can't now remember what they're called or find word of them.

Kobito, probably. I think they're a bit like gnomes. For someone who lives in Japan I'm not much of a one for the mythology.

SuperG

06-12-2008 11:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8991691)

I think the Chaos Dwarves haven't been explicitly written out of Warhammer, the way, say, Squats were in 40k. So as far as I know, they're still out there on the Plain of Zharr, with their hordes of hobgoblin slaves. They haven't been given any detail in a while, though.

Dwarves, in general, tend to be a bit under-used race, especially compared to elves. Maybe it's because of the whole "stolid, hard-working, taciturn, suspicious of outsiders" thing...

They're still there in the background, trading weapons to the Ogres in exchange for slaves, and binding Daemons inside giant warmachines for the usage of Chaos Warlords (the Hellcannon is a War Machine crewed by Chaos Dwarfs).

That said, their 'most recent' Army List (a mere two pages published ~6 years ago iirc) was banned from the latest UKGT, so the /army itself/ suffers from lack of support.

g026r

06-12-2008 12:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by WhammeWhamme (Post 8994836)

That said, their 'most recent' Army List (a mere two pages published ~6 years ago iirc) was banned from the latest UKGT, so the /army itself/ suffers from lack of support.

Wikipedia has a recent edit claiming that GW is supposed to be releasing an updated army list for them within the next year. However, like so much stuff on Wikipedia, it's [\[citation needed\]](#).

noisms

06-12-2008 01:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

What we need is for somebody to stat up AD&D Bull Centaurs and Great Taurus.

noisms

06-12-2008 04:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Dwarf, Evil

The second Dwarf installment is the Evil Dwarves - Derro and Duergar. I like them both; as with 'regular' Dwarves I think they're highly under-rated. One of my campaigns featured a long-running feud with a Duergar nation who collectively functioned as the Big Bad, and I've got lots of mileage out of Derro too, in the past.

Derro were apparently "discovered by Mind Flayers 500 years ago, and by Drow shortly after that." Where are the roll-eyes smileys when you need them? They are basically Dwarfs, but with blonde hair and "skin the colour of an iced over lake" - which is to say, "white with bluish undertones", as the MM helpfully explains. They like magic and slaves rather a lot, which puts them in the same sort of area as Warhammer Chaos Dwarves; has there ever been a fantasy setting where *good* Dwarves use magic?

The Derro are Social Darwinians; they fight a continual war against other Underdark races in an effort to weed out their weakest members. Damn Eugenicists.

My favourite aspect of the Derro is their God, Diinkarazan. He has a whole layer of the Abyss as his lair - *The Prison of the Mad God* - and I always wanted to run a Planescape campaign in which the PCs think they are on a mission for good but, unbeknownst to them, are being tricked into releasing him.

Duergar are a "malevolent breed" of grey-looking Dwarves who live in the deepest, darkest places. They are a bit like Dwarves taken to the *n*th degree; where greed and xenophobia are somewhat charming in a Dwarf, in the *Duergar* those characteristics are pretty much the only personality they have.

Duergar are rather underdeveloped. In the campaign I ran they were the citizens of a commonwealth of city states deep in a mountain range, who had uncovered something Dark and Terrible with their endless mining. The Dark and Terrible thing drove their rulers mad and convinced them that their destiny was endless conquest. Cheesy, but it worked rather well in the end.

kelvingreen

06-12-2008 05:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8994653)

Kobito, probably. I think they're a bit like gnomes. For someone who lives in Japan I'm not much of a one for the mythology.

In the *Shadowrun Companion*, there are regional variants on the standard SR races, including, inexplicably, Drow. I'm pretty sure there was a Japanese dwarf in that, and I think they gave it a traditional/mythological name. But since I don't remember the name, this has all been useless information.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995047)

What we need is for somebody to stat up AD&D Bull Centaurs and Great Taurus.

YES.

Weltenbummler

06-12-2008 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8995705)

In the Shadowrun Companion, there are regional variants on the standard SR races, including, inexplicably, Drow. I'm pretty sure there was a Japanese dwarf in that, and I think they gave it a traditional/mythological name. But since I don't remember the name, this has all been useless information.

Shadowrun Drow are awesome. If I remember it right, they're dark black-blue not because of their skin, but

because they've got fine, dark black-blue fur covering their body.

So they're not only Drow, but also Furies.

And given that it's Shadowrun, you load them up on Katanas, Uzi's, Trenchcoats and Cypernetics.

Katana-wielding cyber-samurai-furry-dark-elves! It doesn't get better than this. Seriously.

kelvingreen

06-12-2008 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8995795)

Katana-wielding cyber-samurai-furry-dark-elves! It doesn't get better than this. Seriously.

When you put it like that, the awesomeness is obvious. ;)

Elemental

06-12-2008 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8990690)

Tangent! Are the Chaos Dwarves still about in Warhammer canon? Or did they get retconned out between editions? They've always been one of my favourite races from that setting, as they seemed so original and different from all the other stock fantasy goings on. Angry coal-mining dwarves that lived in pyramid-ziggurats, had extensive knowledge of firearms and genetic engineering (didn't they invent Black Orcs as a slave race?), worshipped lammas and wore really funky hats. I'd love to use them in WFRP.

Another cool thing I remember was that using magic was so unnatural to them that their sorcerers would slowly turn into stone. Their High Priest was almost completely petrified, and had to use artificial steam-powered limbs to move around.

Wood

06-12-2008 06:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 8990690)

Tangent! Are the Chaos Dwarves still about in Warhammer canon? Or did they get retconned out between editions? They've always been one of my favourite races from that setting, as they seemed so original and different from all the other stock fantasy goings on. Angry coal-mining dwarves that lived in pyramid-ziggurats, had extensive

knowledge of firearms and genetic engineering (didn't they invent Black Orcs as a slave race?), worshipped lammasu and wore really funky hats. I'd love to use them in WFRP.

One generic fantasy setting I homebrewed (for AD&D2, I think) many years ago had a dominant dwarven nation which used minotaurs as a slave race and generally weren't too nice. I think I may have been influenced by the Chaos Dwarves with that one!

The evil dwarves in Confrontation are pretty amazing, too - underground demons catch the ordinary dwarves, skin them and inhabit their stitched-together bodies. And they keep their souls in little voodoo dolls. They're big on miracles rather than magic (Confrontation and its spin-offs has different systems for divine miracles and magic).

noisms

06-12-2008 06:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Elemental (Post 8995851)

Another cool thing I remember was that using magic was so unnatural to them that their sorcerers would slowly turn into stone. Their High Priest was almost completely petrified, and had to use artificial steam-powered limbs to move around.

You're right. What was the guy's name? I've completely forgotten. Didn't Chaos Dwarfs also have their own spells? I really liked the old Warhammer magic system, with all the different schools of Battle Mage - like Grey Wizards, Amber Wizards, Amethyst Wizards...

noisms

06-12-2008 06:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wood (Post 8995854)

The evil dwarves in Confrontation are pretty amazing, too - underground demons catch the ordinary dwarves, skin them and inhabit their stitched-together bodies. And they keep their souls in little voodoo dolls. They're big on miracles rather than magic (Confrontation and its spin-offs has different systems for divine miracles and magic).

Enlighten me - what's Confrontation?

Neil Bishop

06-12-2008 07:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8989860)

It's funny how alignments migrate across the editions like that. The clearest example for me is Orcs. They were Lawful Evil in 2nd edition, but suddenly became Chaotic Evil in 3rd.

Actually, orcs were chaotic evil in the blue book released just before AD&D1E so the 3E migration was consistent, if you like, with earlier canon.

kelvingreen

06-12-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995870)

You're right. What was the guy's name? I've completely forgotten. Didn't Chaos Dwarfs also have their own spells? I really liked the old Warhammer magic system, with all the different schools of Battle Mage - like Grey Wizards, Amber Wizards, Amethyst Wizards...

Astragoth High Priest of Hashut, according to [this list](#). What a fun army list that was. That mid-edition (4th was it?) version of the Warhammer Magic rules was great fun too, especially the good old Heart of Woe magic item.

Malignant Marionette

06-12-2008 10:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995871)

Enlighten me - what's Confrontation?

It's a french fantasy miniature game. Used to be a small game played with twelve or so highly detailed metal miniatures. As the edition changed, the game is now played with 40k-sized forces and all new miniatures are made in prepainted plastic. Here's a linky to their webstore if you want to take a look at the minis, the leftmost of the three links takes you to the plastic stuff, the rightmost to the metal stuff and the middle one to their sci-fi game. http://www.rackham-store.com/index_us.htm

And for those too impatient to browse the store, here's some of the aforementioned dwarves. They won't be available in plastic, being one of the races that got removed from the game and only have the old (still available) miniatures plus a pdf army list. You know, kind of like chaos dwarves. ;)

Troopers: <http://www.rackham-store.com/boutiqu...MRAG1copie.jpg>

Mage: <http://www.rackham-store.com/boutiqu...MGM02copie.jpg>

Monster (coolest mini ever): http://www.rackham-store.com/boutiqu...UKNMBO03_1.jpg

Lugh

06-12-2008 10:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995620)
has there ever been a fantasy setting where good Dwarves use magic?

Warlords of the Accordlands does. The basic story of the dwarves is that they are the constant last bastion keeping the forces of Hell contained deep within the Earth. And, those demons aren't your peaceful, white-collar prisoners either. Every single day is Attica, only with hellfire and big claws and mind-shattering impossibilities.

Unfortunately, the dwarves do such a good job that no one on the surface is really aware there's even a battle going on. So, they tend to dismiss the efforts of the dwarves, and don't understand why they're so grumpy and fatalistic.

The dwarves do get some magic, which, in D&D terms, is largely clerical.

E.T.Smith

06-13-2008 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995620)
Dwarf, Evil
Derro were apparently "discovered by Mind Flayers 500 years ago, and by Drow shortly after that." Where are the roll-eyes smileys when you need them? They are basically Dwarfs, but with blonde hair and "skin the colour of an iced over lake" - which is to say, "white with bluish undertones", as the MM helpfully explains. They like magic and slaves rather a lot...

An example of one of the more dubious (and anachronistic) influences on D&D, the Derro are copied pretty much verbatim from the infamous [Shaver Mysteries](#), a conspiracy theory so nuts even other conspiracy theorists won't go near it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wikipedia
These Dero still lived in the cave cities, according to Shaver, kidnapping surface-dwelling people by the thousands for meat or torture, and using the fantastic "ray" machines that the great ancient races left behind to project tormenting thoughts and voices into our minds (reminiscent of schizophrenia's "influencing machines" such as the Air loom). Dero could be blamed for nearly all misfortunes, from minor "accidental" injuries or illnesses to airplane crashes and catastrophic natural disasters. Women especially were singled out for brutal treatment, including rape, and Dash notes that "Sado-masochism was one of the prominent themes of Shaver's writings." [3] Though generally confined to their caves, Shaver claimed that the Deros sometimes traveled by spaceships or rockets, and had dealings with equally evil extraterrestrial beings. Shaver claimed first-hand knowledge of the Dero and their caves, insisting he had

been their prisoner for several years.

noisms

06-13-2008 01:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I had no idea about that. That wikipedia article is one of the strangest things I've ever read, although a few years ago a paranoid schizophrenic enacted a massive letterbox campaign in the neighbourhood I was living in then; we all received garbled essays about creatures living "under the river" who were out to get the author. It sounds very similar to Shaver. Very sad what mental illness can do to people - it also turns me all around on the subject of the Derro, and makes me think their inclusion in D&D is in rather bad taste.

Oh well.

To change the subject, is there a length limit for threads on this site? This thing is getting damn long.

R-90-2

06-13-2008 01:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8997308)

I had no idea about that. That wikipedia article is one of the strangest things I've ever read, although a few years ago a paranoid schizophrenic enacted a massive letterbox campaign in the neighbourhood I was living in then; we all received garbled essays about creatures living "under the river" who were out to get the author. It sounds very similar to Shaver. Very sad what mental illness can do to people - it also turns me all around on the subject of the Derro, and makes me think their inclusion in D&D is in rather bad taste.

Oh well.

To change the subject, is there a length limit for threads on this site? This thing is getting damn long.

Threads tend to cap at a thousand posts, I think.

noisms

06-13-2008 01:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Okay, I guess that gives us just over 300 to play with, then I'll have to make a Part II.... Christ, 680+ posts and we're only onto 'D'!

The Last Conformist

06-13-2008 02:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995870)

You're right. What was the guy's name? I've completely forgotten. Didn't Chaos Dwarfs also have their own spells? I really liked the old Warhammer magic system, with all the different schools of Battle Mage - like Grey Wizards, Amber Wizards, Amethyst Wizards...

Yes, the Chaos Dwarfs had their own spell deck. Almost all direct attack spells - their mages were very much mystical artillery.

The different schools of battle magic are back since 6th edition - just about everyone thought the single generic battle magic deck was boring.

YojimboC

06-13-2008 09:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Weltenbummler (Post 8995795)

Shadowrun Drow are awesome. If I remember it right, they're dark black-blue not because of their skin, but because they've got fine, dark black-blue fur covering their body.

Somebody at FASA was a Nightcrawler fan, I'm guessing.

6inTruder

06-13-2008 10:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8997332)

Okay, I guess that gives us just over 300 to play with, then I'll have to make a Part II.... Christ, 680+ posts and we're only onto 'D'!

I checked the book, just for shits and giggles, the other day. M/N (the midway in the alphabet) was about... four fifths of the way through. Ergo, the book is *seriously* front loaded.

Acctually, as I have time tonight I think I might to a % of pages breakdown by letter. Just to see.

noisms

06-13-2008 05:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 8999705)

I checked the book, just for shifts and giggles, the other day. M/N (the midway in the alphabet) was about... four fifths of the way through. Ergo, the book is seriously front loaded.

Acctually, as I have time tonight I think I might to a % of pages breakdown by letter. Just to see.

That would be very interesting to see. My guess is that 'D' is the longest section.

kelvingreen

06-13-2008 05:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 8999417)

Somebody at FASA was a Nightcrawler fan, I'm guessing.

And then there was the titanium bone lacing you could use, perhaps on a dwarf who already had cyberspurs...

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elementals

Wow, they just won't let up with the mega-entries, will they? Anyway, Elementals are the dog's bollocks, in my opinion. I can never get enough of their fiery, watery, airy, earthy goodness. I always thought that they were more interesting than both Baatezu and Tanar'ri (Devils and Daemons, whatever), so when the Planescape *Monstrous Compendium III* was released it was like a godsend to me. I still think they're a little underdeveloped. (That's on my big list, by the way. The one that begins with *The Complete Guide to Monster Corpse Armour*, the *Book of Blink Elephants*, *Blink Snakes*, *Blink Apes and Other Blinky Stuff*, *isiZulu Dwarves*, and goes on from there.)

General Information

This is a short intro on how to summon an Elemental and what their common features are. A creature with 4HD or lower *cannot harm an Elemental*: the book even says that unless an orc has a +2 sword it is powerless against them. However, they are vulnerable to *Protection from Evil*, like all summoned and conjured creatures (!?).

The summoning rules are a bit complicated, and there's no need to go into great depth. What's interesting is that Elementals have a 5% chance per round of going apeshit once summoned. Unfortunately they usually go back to whatever Inner Plane they come from forthwith, but I'd like to bend the rules and have an adventure in which the PCs have to track down a pack of rampant Fire Elementals that are doing their nuts all across the kingdom.

Elemental, Air/Earth and Fire/Water

Elementals are pretty much what you would expect. Air ones are "amorphous shifting clouds" which can blast you with whirlwinds and, well, air; Earth ones are very large humanoids which hit you very hard (they can smash walls and break buildings within a few rounds); Fire Elementals are tall sheets of flame which take great joy in burning people to death (they get mighty pissed off at being summoned); Water Elementals look like waves, and generally like to smash ships and sweep you away with tidal waves.

The Elemental entry is a classic example of the simplicity of AD&D's rules: Earth Elementals can break down a wall or smash a cottage in a few rounds - that's all you need to know; Water Elementals can overturn a small ship if they want - that's all you need to know. The designers didn't bother with fiddly hit point systems for inanimate objects and suchlike, and I appreciate the flexibility of what they came up with.

brianm

06-13-2008 05:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elementals are great, whether you need to work on a construction project or just smash through some minions. And they just add flavor to any evil overlord's lair.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9001098)

The Elemental entry is a classic example of the simplicity of AD&D's rules: Earth Elementals can break down a wall or smash a cottage in a few rounds - that's all you need to know; Water Elementals can overturn a small ship if they want - that's all you need to know. The designers didn't bother with fiddly hit point systems for inanimate objects and suchlike, and I appreciate the flexibility of what they came up with.

Huh... So there's no system in the 2e DMG for handling sieges or stuff like that? 1e had a sort of hit-points for buildings and how much damage certain spells and siege engines did to them.

- Brian

noisms

06-13-2008 05:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 9001143)

Huh... So there's no system in the 2e DMG for handling sieges or stuff like that? 1e had a sort of hit-points for buildings and how much damage certain spells and siege engines did to them.

Not as far as I can remember, but I haven't picked up the DMG in a while. It's quite possible there is, but the MM implies that if there are such rules they don't apply to Elementals. An Earth Elemental can smash a cottage in "a few rounds" and break down a wall pretty much whenever it wants - and that's all it says on the matter. I interpret that to mean: Don't bother making rolls. That cottage is going DOWN.

Kaiten

06-13-2008 06:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

It's worth mentioning that the art in the Elementals section is fantastic. Again, DiTerlizzi delivers.

JRM

06-13-2008 08:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 8995620)

Dwarf, Evil Derro were apparently "discovered by Mind Flayers 500 years ago, and by Drow shortly after that." Where are the roll-eyes smileys when you need them? They are basically Dwarfs, but with blonde hair and "skin the colour of an iced over lake" - which is to say, "white with bluish undertones", as the MM helpfully explains. They like magic and slaves rather a lot, which puts them in the same sort of area as Warhammer Chaos Dwarves; have there ever been a fantasy setting where good Dwarves use magic?

There's some Greyhawk material by the late lamented Gary Gygax which suggests Derro are mutant humans, not dwarves, and that's the way I view them in my campaign.

There's an old Gygax campaign seed that just before the Rain of Colourless Fire some Suloise tried to escape the annihilation of their country by digging a vast tunnel westwards, but got trapped underground, their descendants became stunted albino creatures whose existence the PCs discover. If I recall correctly it doesn't name them Derro, but the description of midget white-blond haired albinos is so close I doubt it's a

coincidence. Not 100% sure where it is - I think it's in the original World of Greyhawk boxed set, but it may be in an old Dragon article.

As far as I know, the first published AD&D stats for Derro appear in 1st edition's *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*.

6inTruder

06-13-2008 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9000973)

That would be very interesting to see. My guess is that 'D' is the longest section.

Close. I did two percentages: total page length and just the monster entries.

A 1.6/1.6%
B 6.25/6.5%
C 4.4/4.6%
D 12/12.4%
E 4.7/4.9%
F 1.6/1.6%
G 15.4/16%
H 5.2/5.4%
I 2.3/2.4%
J 0.3/0.3%
K 1.6/1.6%
L 6.25/6.5%
M 6.5/6.8%
N 1.3/1.4%
O 3.6/3.8%
P 3.4/3.5%
Q 0.3/0.3%
R 1.8/1.9%
S 7.6/7.8%
T 4.4/4.6%
U 0.8/0.8%
V 0.5/0.5%
W 2.6/2.7%
X 0.3/0.3%
Y 1/1%
Z 0.8/0.8%

First half (a-m) 68/70.5%

Second half (n-z) 28.4/29.5%

G, being the mega entry. By thirteen pages and about three and a half percent.

noisms

06-13-2008 10:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

'G', eh? At first glance that's surprising, but then you remember the Giants...

6inTruder

06-13-2008 10:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I rather like Elementals in relation to the Elemental-kin and Genies. Like some kind of hierarchy or ecology. I also prefer my Elementals to have more of an intelligence range.

g026r

06-13-2008 10:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9001848)

'G', eh? At first glance that's surprising, but then you remember the Giants...

I can't recall: do golems get a number of sub-entries as well?

noisms

06-13-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 9001935)

I can't recall: do golems get a number of sub-entries as well?

Yes. Probably 10 or more. I don't have the book with me right now.

Lautrec

06-13-2008 10:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

checks 2E MM

Yeah, the G section is full of long entries. Giants, Golems, Gnômes, Githyanki/Githzerai, etc.

Also, GIFF! Yay. :D

Wakboth

06-13-2008 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kaiten (Post 9001270)

It's worth mentioning that the art in the Elementals section is fantastic. Again, DiTerlizzi delivers.

Indeed! I wonder how successful this book would have been without his excellent illustrations?

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9001622)

There's some Greyhawk material by the late lamented Gary Gygax which suggests Derro are mutant humans, not dwarves, and that's the way I view them in my campaign.

I'm not sure if I've invented this, or seen it elsewhere, but I thought Derro are a warped hybrid of humans and dwarves, inheriting some of the worst traits of either...

Too bad I can't get enthusiastic about elementals. They've always been little more than summon-fodder and sacks of HP, in my experience.

g026r

06-13-2008 11:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lautrec (Post 9001984)

Githyanki/Githzerai, etc.

How'd those ones slip my mind? As I recall, the various Gith-subtypes are going to drive noisms crazy with the amount of setting-specific fluff present. :D

noisms

06-13-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 9002179)

How'd those ones slip my mind? As I recall, the various Gith-subtypes are going to drive noisms crazy with the amount of setting-specific fluff present. :D

Ah, you know my monster preferences so well already. ;)

Oddly, Spelljammer specific monsters offend me less than the Forgotten Realms stuff. Possibly because there's just too damn much of the latter. I'd still prefer there was none, though.

noisms

06-14-2008 12:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9002131)

Indeed! I wonder how successful this book would have been without his excellent illustrations?

I've definitely noticed that I have a predisposition to liking the monsters illustrated by DiTerlizzi. A book full of Jeff Butler pictures would probably never have grabbed my attention in the same way.

Brutus

06-14-2008 01:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9002259)

I've definitely noticed that I have a predisposition to liking the monsters illustrated by DiTerlizzi. A book full of Jeff Butler pictures would probably never have grabbed my attention in the same way.

I would never have bought any D&D books if it wasn't for Diterlizzi Illustrations. My first two were the monstrous compendium and the planescape monstrous compendium. 100% TD. I didn't even buy the core books, just collected the planescape stuff that he illustrated (which is a lot!). I still treat D&D as an opportunity to collect monster art, since he's moved on to greener pastures. :)

I can't imagine having gotten into rpgs at all or caring about D&D books had they no been covered in DiTerlizzi art. :D

noisms

06-14-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elemental, Air Kin

Sylph

The Sylph is one of the classic examples of monster designers plucking weird numbers from the air: Sylphs have a 20% likelihood of being friendly to adventurers (as is often the case, apparently Reaction Adjustment for Charisma is thrown out of the window); their nests have a 1% chance of having an egg inside; Sylphs meet up once ever 28 years for a big shindig...

They're basically a male fantasy made real - a beautiful young woman with wings who just wants a one-night stand of no-strings attached, egg-making sex. Who could refuse? The entry speculates that Sylphs are possibly a crossbreed between Aerial Servants and Nymphs; it's difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how that could work, but I suppose while we're pulling stuff out of our arses, we might as well go the whole hog.

A hint of a down-note creeps into the final paragraph when we find out that the main danger to Sylphs is "evil humanoid males who attempt to capture them for dark purposes." I'm assuming that's alluding to rape, which is an unusual foray into the subject on the part of the 2nd edition designers. I'm not particularly keen on having that sort of topic dealt with in a game, but I suppose an adventure to rescue a Sylph from her evil captors could work.

Aerial Servant

An Aerial Servant is an invisible blobby thing with a Strength of 23; its main *modus operandi* is to strangle people to death. They reproduce by being blown apart by storms (5% chance).

Unintentional hilarity:

Quote:

A cleric who summons an aerial servant will be attacked unless behind a protection from evil, because the servants resent being summoned. Otherwise, the servant will complete any duty for the cleric, except fighting, as fast as possible. **If the servant is prevented from completing its mission, it goes insane and returns to kill the summoning cleric.**

demiurge1138

06-14-2008 03:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9005004)

Sylph

A hint of a down-note creeps into the final paragraph when we find out that the main danger to Sylphs is "evil humanoid males who attempt to capture them for dark purposes." I'm assuming that's alluding to rape, which is an unusual foray into the subject on the part of the 2nd edition designers. I'm not particularly keen on having that sort of topic dealt with in a game, but I suppose an adventure to rescue a Sylph from her evil captors could work.

See, I never read that as rape, even with the prior references to falling in love with human males for the egg makings. In my mind, wicked sorcerers were looking to capture sylphs to pluck off their wings to make into pixie dust to make them fly.

But looking back on it, yeah, rape is more plausible. Thanks for killing my innocence, noisms!

noisms

06-14-2008 03:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9005608)

See, I never read that as rape, even with the prior references to falling in love with human males for the egg making: In my mind, wicked sorcerers were looking to capture sylphs to pluck off their wings to make into pixie dust to make them fly.

But looking back on it, yeah, rape is more plausible. Thanks for killing my innocence, noisms!

I never read it as rape originally either, but coming back to the entry after many years of not even thinking about Sylphs, it suddenly struck me that that was what was meant.

Or maybe I'm just jaded. Pixie dust! Yeah!

JRM

06-14-2008 09:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9005004)

...The entry speculates that Sylphs are possibly a crossbreed between Aerial Servants and Nymphs; it's difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how that could work, but I suppose while we're pulling stuff out of our arses, we might as well go the whole hog.

A hint of a down-note creeps into the final paragraph when we find out that the main danger to Sylphs is "evil humanoid males who attempt to capture them for dark purposes." I'm assuming that's alluding to rape, which is an unusual foray into the subject on the part of the 2nd edition designers. I'm not particularly keen on having that sort of topic dealt with in a game, but I suppose an adventure to rescue a Sylph from her evil captors could work.

Odd, I don't find it very difficult imagining how a Aerial Servant - Nymph crossbreeding could work, they're both supernatural elemental creatures. There are many other magical crossbreeds in AD&D far less plausible, such as Owlbears, Thessalhydra or Dracolisks. I shudder to think how their progenitors got together to create them, especially the latter two which are described as resulting from crossbreeding in the wild rather than magical experimentation. I suspect some *philters of love* may have been involved.

The bit about evil humanoid males trying to capture them is crass, though.

kami2awa

06-15-2008 09:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 8991691)

I think the Chaos Dwarves haven't been explicitly written out of Warhammer, the way, say, Squats were in 40k. So as far as I know, they're still out there on the Plain of Zharr, with their hordes of hobgoblin slaves. They haven't been given any detail in a while, though.

Dwarves, in general, tend to be a bit under-used race, especially compared to elves. Maybe it's because of the whole "stolid, hard-working, taciturn, suspicious of outsiders" thing...

Chaos Dwarves are currently relegated to being the creators and operators of the awesome Hellcannon weapon, a daemon-possessed living cannon that tends to rampage and eat people if not kept in check. Otherwise, I don't think they appear at all in current WH.

noisms

06-15-2008 09:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9007766)

Chaos Dwarves are currently relegated to being the creators and operators of the awesome Hellcannon weapon, a daemon-possessed living cannon that tends to rampage and eat people if not kept in check. Otherwise, I don't think they appear at all in current WH.

That's so.... Warhammer. I miss that game.

noisms

06-16-2008 12:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elemental, Earth Kin

Pech

Pech are dwarves to the max - shorter, less friendly, keener on pickaxes, inhabiting deeper places. They come from the Elemental Plane of Earth to the Prime Material Plane, in search of a better life.

I rather like that, and I've been trying to think of a way to make a campaign out of it. A nomadic clan of Pech, bravely venturing to some random Prime Material world to carve - literally - a new life for themselves. But how do they deal with the Deep Dragons, the Illithids, the Duergar, and the other races of the Underdark who they have never encountered in their home plane?

Or, to put a darker spin on it: hordes of Pech have entered the Underdark from the Plane of Earth. The other races can't compete with these master diggers, and they are gradually being forced closer and closer to the surface. How will the surface dwellers cope with their increased contact with the Duergar, Drow and the like?

Interesting side note: Pech have a Strength of 18/50, which makes them almost as strong as a Pit Fiend.

Sandling

A Sandling is an asexual, amorphous pile of predatory sand which lives on minerals. It hangs about in dungeon areas, just waiting to be stepped on so it can leap into life and shout "Aha! I keel you!" The concept really reminds me of something - either from a low-budget sci-fi TVM or a naff TV series; I just can't quite remember what.

Unintentional Hilarity: "They are said to be excellent ingredients for mortar, but *they and many druids object to this treatment.*" I love it.

I bet nobody reading this has ever had a quest to hunt down Sandlings for mortar before.

Ikrastr

06-16-2008 01:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9005004)

A hint of a down-note creeps into the final paragraph when we find out that the main danger to Sylphs is "evil humanoid males who attempt to capture them for dark purposes." I'm assuming that's alluding to rape, which is an unusual foray into the subject on the part of the 2nd edition designers.

For me, this is part of the beauty of 1 and 2e. You have the relentless insistence on good and evil, but enough good taste and foresight not to spell out the implications of what that means in YOUR game. Do you want to interpret the evil males as rapists? Well, that works. Do you want to keep a more innocent game, and have the men capturing them for wing harvesting? That works too. The games dumped a ton of ideas and hooks into your lap, and you fished out what you wanted and ran with it. It didn't tell you how your world had to be. Which is probably why, decades later, I can still mine those books for ideas.

There's no doubt in my mind, though, that that sentence had a second purpose: reminding adolescent players that forcing the pretty air elemental is an *evil* act. The game needed hot naked females because it was targeting a certain demographic, and anyway, fantasy and mythology have always been swimming with them. But I'm certain the designers didn't want games to turn into crass little glorifications of adolescent wish-fulfillment, any more than it had to. So little reminders about "this is evil, children" were, I think, important.

DMH

06-16-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9011409)

The concept really reminds me of something - either from a low-budget sci-fi TVM or a naff TV series; I just can't quite remember what.

The only thing I can think of is V the series. One episode had a predator that lived in sand and sucked down humans to eat.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9011409)

Elemental, Earth Kin

Pech

Pech are dwarves to the max - shorter, less friendly, keener on pickaxes, inhabiting deeper places. They come from the Elemental Plane of Earth to the Prime Material Plane, in search of a better life.

I rather like that, and I've been trying to think of a way to make a campaign out of it.

For me, this is the Irish come to America. I'd play it with one of those bog-standard, big-world, many-planes D&D games (the sort you get if you use everything in every book), where families of pech have come through a gate and tried to set up shop in the local mining cities, but they're facing prejudice from the previous workers - dwarves, say - who are worried that these new miners, who are both better-skilled and willing to work for less, are going to drive them out of a job.

It's largely background, at first, unless a PC is a member of one of the two races, but will eventually get all Gangs of New York with rival mobs and such and the PCs forced to take sides or try to mediate the peace.

~ jason

Sleeper

06-17-2008 04:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9011409)

A Sandling is an asexual, amorphous pile of predatory sand which lives on minerals. It hangs about in dungeon areas just waiting to be stepped on so it can leap into life and shout "Aha! I keel you!" The concept really reminds me of something - either from a low-budget sci-fi TVM or a naff TV series; I just can't quite remember what.

Unintentional Hilarity: "They are said to be excellent ingredients for mortar, but they and many druids object to this treatment." I love it.

I bet nobody reading this has ever had a quest to hunt down Sandlings for mortar before.

They do? I just checked A4 (their first appearance, I believe), and their intelligence is listed as "none".

Though now I have an image an ancient city lost in the desert. When the winds blow and the streets are covered with drifting sand, the tens of thousands sandlings in the mortar wake and start to struggle, to move. Buried under the sand, the city slowly shifts and moves as they struggle and fight to be free. And a frustrated archaeologist who is *absolutely certain* he knows where the lost city of the sun should be buried... except it

isn't there.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9014414)

For me, this is the Irish come to America. I'd play it with one of those bog-standard, big-world, many-planes D&D games (the sort you get if you use everything in every book), where families of pech have come through a gate and tried to set up shop in the local mining cities, but they're facing prejudice from the previous workers - dwarves, say - who are worried that these new miners, who are both better-skilled and willing to work for less, are going to drive them out of a job.

It's largely background, at first, unless a PC is a member of one of the two races, but will eventually get all Gangs of New York with rival mobs and such and the PCs forced to take sides or try to mediate the peace.

A low-born and brutal dwarf butcher with a handlebar mustache who becomes the underboss at the Five Tunnels mining center by leading his cronies in a tunnel-fight against the pech, and then 15 years later inadvertently takes a clean-shaven pretty boy under his wing who is actually the son of the dead pech immigrant leader?

I like it.

noisms

06-17-2008 10:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9014580)

Though now I have an image an ancient city lost in the desert. When the winds blow and the streets are covered with drifting sand, the tens of thousands sandlings in the mortar wake and start to struggle, to move. Buried under the sand, the city slowly shifts and moves as they struggle and fight to be free. And a frustrated archaeologist who is absolutely certain he knows where the lost city of the sun should be buried... except it isn't there.

That sounds like it should have been a story by Lord Dunsany. Great stuff!

Kakita Kojiro

06-17-2008 10:59 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9014580)

Though now I have an image an ancient city lost in the desert. When the winds blow and the streets are covered with drifting sand, the tens of thousands sandlings in the mortar wake and start to struggle, to move. Buried under the sand, the city slowly shifts and moves as they struggle and fight to be free. And a frustrated archaeologist who is absolutely certain he knows where the lost city of the sun should be buried... except it isn't there.

What player in his right mind would agree to adventure in the land of mortar, where the sandlings lie?

Milk

06-17-2008 11:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9011409)
Sandling

A Sandling is an asexual, amorphous pile of predatory sand which lives on minerals.

I'm suddenly curious about how many D&D creatures are "-ling"s.

Sleeper

06-17-2008 11:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

What if the sandlings are old, old beyond imagining?

What if, so long ago that mountains have fallen into themselves and become scant hills, there was a vast empire that built their cities of mile-high towers of colored glass? To shape it and sustain it, they used living glass. Spirits and substance hauled from the fundamental source of all matter, where it twists and seethes in a form of primal self-awareness.

For whatever reason, that utterly unknown civilization must have fallen. Whether it fell fast or slow makes no difference. From our distant vantage point, it is but an instant compared to the immense span of time that has since passed. What matters is that eventually the great towers lay spread across the plains, like stalks and sheafs of grain laying amidst the stubble during the harvest.

Except there was nobody to collect them, bundle them up, use them. There was only Time, who in her slow way played with them like a clumsy child. Breaking them down, casting them away, shattering them, grinding them up.

Until naught remained but dust, or sand. This desert is not a mountain, worn by Time's erosion into tiny grains. No, the desert, all of it, is a slumbering expanse of reclaimed glass. And every once in a while, a tiny piece remembers what it once was, and lashes out with the unding ache of lost and almost forgotten glories.

noisms

06-17-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9016082)
What if the sandlings are old, old beyond imagining?

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Reminds me of Ozymandias.

I love this thread. The only problem is that my "list of things I want to run" has ballooned from half a dozen to somewhere over a hundred ever since beginning it...

Whitemagebishieboy

06-17-2008 07:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9017380)
Reminds me of Ozymandias.

I love this thread. The only problem is that my "list of things I want to run" has ballooned from half a dozen to somewhere over a hundred ever since beginning it...

So the book is doing it's job too well?

Whenever I'm faced with too many choices, i rely on the gamers best friend. Dice.

noisms

06-17-2008 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elemental, Fire Kin

Salamander

Every so often in the MM you come across little throwaway lines which were obviously deliberately thrown in as ways to spark off the fires of campaign ideas. I'm always grateful for these; they demonstrate (I think) the fact that the game designers were not just thinking about what would be cool, but also about how the monsters could be used to really add something to people's games. Most of the monsters in the MM could have ended up just being grist for random encounter tables, but they are saved from that fate by this tendency on the part of the designers.

One of these examples is in the Salamander entry: "Salamanders are natives of the elemental plane of Fire, and thus they thrive in hot places. *These cruel, evil creatures come to the Prime Material plane for reasons known only to them.*" The implication being, of course, that the reasons are known only to them AND TO THE DM, whose brain is immediately generating fifty-thousand ideas for plots involving Salamanders.

So let's have a **COMPETITION**. Post your ideas! Why do Salamanders come to the Prime Material Plane, and how would you build an adventure around it? The best entry wins eternal kudos, gratitude and good karma, plus a billion trillion kazillion dollars.

(If you need more information on what a Salamander is: It's like a centaur, but with a giant snake body where the horse body should be. It's Chaotic Evil, can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons, causes heat damage merely by touch, and likes to grab people and throw them in furnaces or lava streams just for the hell of it.)

Fire Snake

This must be one of the shortest monster entries in the book. A Fire Snake is basically that - a snake that lives in fires. Some people think they're larval Salamanders. Somewhat mysteriously, they "often accumulate gems", but the book doesn't say why. (You get bonus points for the **COMPETITION** if you can come up with an explanation.) Er...that's it.

Steve H

06-17-2008 08:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That quote about Salamanders reminds me of one about Umber Hulks (which I think was from a *Dragon Ecology* of... rather than the MM, but still), which said that they hire themselves out as bodyguard and tunnel diggers, accepting payment in gold coins - but that no-one knows what they want the gold for.

As for Salamanders, I'll go for the low-hanging fruit for my idea - barbecued humanoid flesh is a delicacy for Salamanders. The rest writes itself...

DMH

06-17-2008 08:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Fire snakes are actually baby thoqqua and the salamanders want to use them to turn the Underdark and then the surface world into magma. Why- to have a resort free from all the annoying pests like firebats from the plane of fire.

TavishArtair

06-17-2008 08:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9017409)

*So let's have a **COMPETITION**. Post your ideas! Why do Salamanders come to the Prime Material Plane, and how would you build an adventure around it? The best entry wins eternal kudos, gratitude and good karma, plus a billion trillion kazillion dollars.*

A kazillion, eh.

Well, see, the thing is, the Elemental Plane of Fire, in spite of being aflame, could just as easily be likened to its opposite element, water. Specifically, an ocean. Many things live deep in the ocean... great, massive fire elementals, who burn so hot that even the efreeti flinch... but salamanders are not one of those. Rather, they live closer to the surface of that ocean of fire. While there's no literal surface on a plane, they nonetheless are found on its edges.

Now, because they're adapted to living close to the "surface," they tend to rely on it in certain ways. Unlike pure elementals, they are partially other elements as well, in balance. While adult salamanders are adapted to the depths of the Elemental Plane of Fire, their young aren't, and need a plane with many elements to thrive, as otherwise they'll simply disintegrate into scattered embers without anything to hold them together. So, they retreat to the "shallows," lurking in fiery locations on the Prime Material Plane, in order to mate and give birth, a process which is left to the reader's imagination. The result is commonly held to be fire snakes.

The gems that fire snakes accumulate are placed there by salamanders. The precise answer as to why is not certain, although it is believed they are acting out the curiously birdlike behaviour of lining their "nest." Others state that they act as a focus for the elemental energies involved and assist in the transmutation of a fire snake to a mature salamander. Regardless, their tendency to pillage and loot seems to be strongly connected to their mating cycle. Worst yet, a burning town this year may mean more salamanders the next, who go on to greater conquests. This is what **truly** makes them evil. Their destruction only feeds the fire, resulting in more destruction.

JRM

06-17-2008 10:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9015913)

What player in his right mind would agree to adventure in the land of mortar, where the sandlings lie?

Oh, that pun's so awful I must applaud you. Now I'm curious what the rest of the poem is - what's the Sandling equivalent of Tolkien's One Ring?

One Brick To Rule Them All?

One Brick to build on them, and in the darkness bind them?

Hmm, that sort of makes sense and ties in with a lost city build from sandlings. Now who were the Nine, the Seven and the Three Bricks given to, and what were they used for?

Aha! It's obvious, they are the the heartstones of dungeons - the Evil One disguised himself as The Architect and gifted various subterranean races with advanced building & mining skills, which they used to gain wealth and build fabulous homes for themselves, not knowing that the Brick they build them round would enslave them and twist their home into an unnatural deathtrap maze.

Kakita Kojiro

06-18-2008 01:35 AM

(To atone for my awful pun...)

Salamanders come to the Prime as part of their eugenics program. See, their eggs need intense heat to hatch -- those aren't gems with their larva, the fire snakes, those are their *eggs*. The quality and nature of the intense heat applied to

their eggs influences what kind of fire snake and then fire salamander that is produced.

Hatch a gem-egg on the plane of Fire, and you get your standard salamander. Hatch one on the Prime, and you can get... other things. Things that make GMs cackle with glee.

Oh, and good luck with those gems you snatched from clubbing those fire snakes to death, Mr. Adventurer. Mummy salamander is sure to come looking for her wee babies, and Og help you if someone tosses a fireball while you're wearing that *helm of brilliance* you made from 'em, and the things *hatch* on you.

demiurge1138

06-18-2008 01:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Salamanders come to the Prime Material Plane not for food, nor for reproduction. They come for religion.

The salamanders, like most elementals, were once a godless lot, paying homage to powerful elemental rulers and ancestors, but never worshipping them. But once salamanders started being summoned by mortals, they found in mortals faith, which mortals could use to heal wounds, call down the fury of the heavens... or summon salamanders.

The salamanders aspire to be the rulers of Elemental Fire, but face stiff competition from the cunning, magically adept efreet. So, in order to even the scales, salamanders come to the Material for research purposes, to worship and pray to all manner of deities, to compare which ones will give them the power to overcome their adversaries.

The Monstrous Manual was right--salamanders have antlers not for combat, but for magic. *Those are antennae, intended to recieve and amplify divine magic.*

Littleredfox

06-18-2008 02:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9017409)

Elemental, Fire Kin

These cruel, evil creatures come to the Prime Material plane for reasons known only to them.

It's an extreme Sport.

Translated into Human perceptions it is analogous to playing cricket in the deep arctic with termite grenades for balls.

Only the hardest core Salamander sportsbeings come to the PMP to play thier interminably long game and mostly metaphysical game. That and thier ontourage of groupies, guru's and advertising teams.

kelvingreen

06-18-2008 03:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9017409)

The implication being, of course, that the reasons are known only to them AND TO THE DM, whose brain is immediately generating fifty-thousand ideas for plots involving Salamanders.

It's a good thing *D&D* is not *Shadowrun*, or the implication would be that the reasons are known only to the salamanders and to a sourcebook that will only be released long after the information has ceased to be useful and will likely contradict whatever the GM came up with in the meantime.

Or something.

noisms

06-18-2008 12:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9018725)

The Monstrous Manual was right--salamanders have antlers not for combat, but for magic. Those are antennae, intended to receive and amplify divine magic.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention the antlers!

noisms

06-18-2008 09:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Okay, you all did very well in the competition, so I can't possibly decide on a winner. You'll have divide the kazillion dollar prize between you. Luckily that means you still end up with a bajillion dollars each.

Elemental, Water Kin

Nereid

Also known as "honeyed ones", Nereids take the form of "voluptuous" (female fairies are always voluptuous, and I love them for it) maidens who tempt sailors to their doom. 95% undetectable when in the water they are *incapable of being harmed* by males - who just can't bring themselves to attack. They can also do a fair amount of ass kicking if they want, by spitting venom, summoning watery pets, and - hooray! - instakilling by kissing people, causing them to drown. (If you pass the saving throw, though, you "find ecstasy" instead).

There are quite a few little hooks scattered through the text. First, Nereids are inextricably attached to their shawls, which contains the creature's essence. This means that if a Nereid loses its shawl, it will do anything to get it back - including, presumably, trying to persuade adventurers. Second, if you can get a Nereid's shawl, you can control her, possibly forcing her to be a guide through the Plane of Water. And finally, the only reason a Nereid will be found in the Prime Material Plane is if she has been exiled from her home plane. But why has she been exiled, and who has she been exiled by.....?

Water Weird

Wow, two instakill monsters in the space of one page! The Water Weird is a watery serpent which grabs you and pulls you underwater; each round you have to make a saving throw lest you drown. That's pretty much all there is to it; there's a sentence on Water Weirids being also assume control of water elementals, but their description is only marginally longer than that of the Fire Snake.

JRM

06-19-2008 08:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Never much cared for the Water Weird. It's one of those unreasonably deadly low HD monsters that needs a particular trick to easily dispose off, like Green Slime. It was just so random in how it'd kill PCs that I wouldn't feel fair sticking one in an adventure.

I had nothing against using insakill monsters now and again, but I liked ones that were easy to foreshadow for observant players (e.g. ghostly webs for phase spiders, states for medusae).

And that controlling Water Elementals power could be pretty icky, I imagined the weird parasitising the poor elemental and slowly devouring it will playing its body like a puppet. Not that I minded that! It reminded me of Rhalto the Marvellous when the chug puppets the sandestin. Maybe that's why there are all those fonts with Water Weirids in dungeons - evil wizards keep them to control their water elemental slaves.

Foxworthy

06-19-2008 10:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Awesome thread, brings back a lot of nostalgia and a good old fashion vibe mixed with cool ideas. All shaken not stirred. Kudos to you all.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9022696)
Water Weird

Wow, two instakill monsters in the space of one page! The Water Weird is a watery serpent which grabs you and pulls you underwater; each round you have to make a saving throw lest you drown. That's pretty much all there is to it; there's a sentence on Water Weirids being also assume control of water elementals, but their description is only marginally longer than that of the Fire Snake.

Ah the Water Weird. Our group lost a cleric to a water weird, but not because of the creature we killed that. But because he fell to the bottom of the pool and couldn't swim, let alone swim in his armor. There he was at the bottom of the pool with only a wooden hatch in the bottom. Unfortunately he didn't get I was joking when I said he should break it and escape. Since wooden hatches in the bottom of a pool wouldn't be a good place to try and escape the water above you. So he smashed the panel and got killed by poison darts.

I still wonder why poison darts were installed at the bottom of a pool with a water weird.

Almost as bad as the player that walked into a room with a skeleton covered by yellow moss.

Good times.

noisms

06-19-2008 10:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Foxworthy (Post 9025492)

I still wonder why poison darts were installed at the bottom of a pool with a water weird.

Why, to kill unsuspecting clerics, of course. ;)

My first DM was my friend's older brother, and he was big into that kind of thing. I remember once coming across a pool in a dungeon which seemed like it contained a secret passageway. So my character jumped in - only to instantly turn to solid gold and sink to the bottom, dead. Apparently, the DM had just re-read *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which had the exact same scenario - except he'd forgotten that CS Lewis at least gave his characters some clues.

brianm

06-19-2008 12:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Among the circles I gamed in, water wierds were popular almost entirely due to [this painting](#) by Elmore.

Pretty much anytime you saw an ornate pool of water with something useful at the bottom, we always assumed a wierd. We also made sure what we were seeing was actually *in* the pool, and not hanging above it where its image would be seen "inside" the water as a reflection.

- Brian

noisms

06-19-2008 01:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elemental, Composite

Tempest

Tempests are living storms. A cool concept, but spoiled by some rather ridiculous ideas. For instance: "They can communicate with air and water elementals and their kin, and genies, through subtle wind buffets and splatterings of precipitation." I mean, come on now. Another for instance: "Whatever their origin, they do breed and reproduce as storms. Though "male" and "female" do not truly describe the different types of tempests, there are two genders. When living storms of different genders meet, they have a brief, tempestuous affair, causing a great conflagration that may last more than a week." Yet another: "Some sages speculate that their physical form, or possibly some event in their history, causes them to hate animal life. It is quite possible that the electrical impulses produced by animal brains cause pain to the tempest."

Ridiculous.

Still, the basic idea is great, and has at least three nice hooks:

1. When a tempest is killed, a silver residue remains which can be fashioned into a *wand of lightning*. Sounds like a job for a likely group of adventurers to me...

2. Tempests can be accidentally summoned when a spellcaster is trying to call up another elemental or casting a *weather summoning* spell. I'm picturing the PCs having to chase a rampaging Tempest across the kingdom in an effort to restrain it.

3. Tempests live off moisture, so they are attracted to battlefields, where they suck up all the water from the corpses. Now that would be a cool random encounter. Storm clouds gathering on the horizon. A group of adventurers having to ride towards it. Coming up over a rise and looking down on a panorama of corpses littering a field, with a tempest feeding off them.

Skriaxit

An intelligent and evil sandstorm, which does pretty much what you would expect, and feeds on fear.

Arctic Tempest

A tempest which has powers of cold, rather than lightning.

Black Cloud of Vengeance

A living storm which can rain fire on opponents.

Milk

06-20-2008 12:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9026033)

3. Tempests live off moisture, so they are attracted to battlefields, where they suck up all the water from the corpses. Now that would be a cool random encounter. Storm clouds gathering on the horizon. A group of adventurers having to ride towards it. Coming up over a rise and looking down on a panorama of corpses littering a field, with a tempest feeding off them.

How intelligent are Tempests? Because I'm seeing adventurers being called in to discover who's been stirring up tensions between two unfriendly nations, only to find that behind the whole conspiracy is a Tempest, or Tempests, who desire to feed off the resultant war.

Mark Krawec

06-20-2008 12:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9026033)

3. Tempests live off moisture, so they are attracted to battlefields, where they suck up all the water from the corpses

Battlefields nothing - what about marshes? Or even farmlands?

Maybe our heroes are called in to investigate reports of mysterious storm clouds into which rain falls up from the fields, leaving behind acres of dessicated chaff (today's fire danger : **high**!) & an ever-expanding dustbowl.

noisms

06-20-2008 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Milk (Post 9027715)

How intelligent are Tempests? Because I'm seeing adventurers being called in to discover who's been stirring up tensions between two unfriendly nations, only to find that behind the whole conspiracy is a Tempest, or Tempests, who desire to feed off the resultant war.

They could do this by causing localized flooding, thus increasing tensions over land between the two nations.

JasonK

06-20-2008 03:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I can't really see much subtlety in a Tempest, sorry. They're giant dark stormclouds with malaevolent faces. How the hell could they operate in secrecy?

Anyway, I have to say that the Elemental Kin were always far more interesting to me as creatures than straight Elementals. Elementals are blobs of matter, things you summon, but the Kin have a personality, structure and form to interact with, and that made them interesting to me.

Incidentally, since Nereids are basically the Succubi of the water elemental plane, I tend to think of them in a similar way - they're the spies and assassins, turning enemy agents rogue, infiltrating and recruiting. They claim to be exiles on the prime, sure, but that's really just cover. They're really high-ranked operatives in the war between the elements, distributing swords out of lakes, trapping druids in trees and recruiting agents for their lords.

~ jason

see

06-20-2008 06:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think it's cute that killing a tempest leaves you with the cloud's silver lining.

Crowetron

06-20-2008 07:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9029358)

I think it's cute that killing a tempest leaves you with the cloud's silver lining.

LOL! I never made that connection before! Well, that does it, I have to use a Tempest in my next campaign, because that's the cutest damn thing AD&D ever threw at me.

trippingsatyr

06-20-2008 10:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Oh, I got a good one! Maybe do a Silver Surfer/Galactus like thing. Something comes destroying kingdoms and battlefields to feed..a large living storm. Others say that before it comes, its herald arrives. This herald helps to stir things up, ccausing wars and strife so his master can feed.

Man, I so need to run a C&C game..

noisms

06-20-2008 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9029474)

LOL! I never made that connection before! Well, that does it, I have to use a Tempest in my next campaign, because that's the cutest damn thing AD&D ever threw at me.

I can't believe I didn't make the connection either. I must be slipping.

noisms

06-20-2008 01:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by trippingsatyr (Post 9030151)

Oh, I got a good one! Maybe do a Silver Surfer/Galactus like thing. Something comes destroying kingdoms and battlefields to feed..a large living storm. Others say that before it comes, its herald arrives. This herald helps to stir things up, ccausing wars and strife so his master can feed.

Man, I so need to run a C&C game..

I like it. So whenever wars and strife occur, rumours spread like wildfire that the Herald of the Storm has arrived to sew the seeds of chaos in advance of the coming tempest. He's almost like a bogey man.

Except this bogey man is REAL. Dun dun DUNNNN!

Milk

06-20-2008 09:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by trippingsatyr (Post 9030151)

Oh, I got a good one! Maybe do a Silver Surfer/Galactus like thing. Something comes destroying kingdoms and battlefields to feed..a large living storm. Others say that before it comes, its herald arrives. This herald helps to stir things up, ccausing wars and strife so his master can feed.

Oh, nice. As JasonK mentioned, making the link between a giant living storm and political manipulation is the toughie, but that works.

noisms

06-20-2008 10:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elf

Ah, Elves. Don't you just love the little skinny point-eared blighters? No? I don't either, actually, truth be told. I'm not sure what it is; possibly it's just because they're popular, and I'm one of nature's true contrarians. But I also don't like what Elves have become over the years. Tolkien's vision was of a talented, beautiful, intelligent race who were fatally flawed - whether through arrogance, pride, or vengefulness - and I like that vision, because fatal flaws are one of the cornerstones of all great Western literature. D&D Elves, though...they just seem too *perfect*. Or rather, that's often how they're portrayed - a race of noble, generous, intelligent, joyful, smarmy goody-goodies, who live an idyllic existence in a utopian-socialist woodland paradise and never ever make mistakes. For the same reasons that I don't like standard D&D Centaurs, I don't much like standard D&D Elves.

That said, I'm not against the race if they're done well or done *differently*. I love Birthright and Dark Sun Elves, for instance. I'm just sick to death of the standard tropes. They need freshening up. Cannibalistic Elves, brutal totalitarian Elves, capricious and sadistic Elves, weak and stupid Elves... these are the concepts I'd like to see in a game. Maybe someday I'll make one.

Anyway, enough ranting. On with the entry.

High Elves

High Elves are the 'standard' Elves that we all know so well; the ones who live in forests and like bows and arrows a lot. You probably know them back to front already. Still, there were a few surprises to me reading through the text. Firstly, "Elven women are the equal of their male counterparts in all aspects of warfare. In fact, some bands of elves will contain units of female fighters, who will be mounted on unicorns. This occurs rarely (5% chance), and only 10-30 elf maidens will be encountered in such a unit. However, the legends of the destruction wrought by these elven women are rampant among the enemies of the elves." I'm not sure what to make of that - for some reason elven women riding unicorns and "wreaking destruction" don't really go together in my brain. Secondly, "in their world within the forest, elves hold in check the dark forces of evil, and the creatures that would plunder the forest and then move on to

plunder another. For this reason alone, *elves are irreplaceable*." Make of that what you will.

Grey Elves (Faerie)

Yep, I thought that random (Faerie) a bit odd, too. Grey Elves are modeled after their Middle Earth namesake, I think, in that they are rather more into studying, contemplation, and the like.

Wood Elves

These are the 'wild' branch of the Elves, and remind me of Warhammer Wood Elves, in that they are more neutral than good (i.e. they don't mind killing people). I wonder if anybody's ever started up Wood Elf Wardancers?

Half Elves

Some people dislike Half Elves, I hear, but I've always thought of them as the most interesting flavour of Elf, because they have the whole caught-between-two-worlds thing going on. That has some potential. Also, I've always rather liked the idea of a Half-Elf civilisation - one begun by the offspring of a group of humans and a group of Elves, who were stranded together on an island somewhere many centuries ago, and whose bloodlines are now thoroughly intertwined.

Cultist of Sooty

06-20-2008 10:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032013)

Secondly, "in their world within the forest, elves hold in check the dark forces of evil, and the creatures that would plunder the forest and then move on to plunder another. For this reason alone, elves are irreplaceable." Make of that what you will.

You know how they say that money doesn't grow on trees? Well, that's because our world doesn't have any elves and people plundered all the money trees long, long ago. In proper elf woods, there's cold hard cash right there, dangling from the branches for anyone who knows where to look and can survive a few elven arrows in the back.

DMH

06-20-2008 10:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I posted a campaign seed on Enworld 2-3 years ago. It had dwarves dominate society (ie humanity, halflings and gnomes) via advanced materials and protecting a gate from demonic elves. People moaned about how I had changed dwarven culture, yet nothing negative about the change to elves.

And then there was the thread here about lichen and insect eating elves: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=337842>

Lugh

06-20-2008 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I've always been partial to the fascist, racist, homicidal elven subtype, personally. Elves *are* superior to humans in virtually every way. And they will torture you until you agree. Also, I've always seen the Melniboneans (sp?) as elves.

The only reason elves don't rule the world is that they spend more time attempting to cull their unworthy relatives than fighting non-elves.

kelvingreen

06-21-2008 12:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032013)

That said, I'm not against the race if they're done well or done differently. I love Birthright and Dark Sun Elves, for instance. I'm just sick to death of the standard tropes. They need freshening up. Cannibalistic Elves, brutal totalitarian Elves, capricious and sadistic Elves, weak and stupid Elves... these are the concepts I'd like to see in a game. Maybe someday I'll make one.

Living in forests as they did, my elves didn't really develop a fire-and-metalworking culture and were closer to our jungle tribes than the fantasy stereotype, only with magic, obviously. They were also hugely protective of their habitats and hunted invaders remorselessly. Not hugely original, but more palatable to me than the usual annoyingly perfect and noble version.

Also, for some reason, I'd always thought of elves as being taller than humans, so it was quite a shock for me to come to *D&D* and see them portrayed as smaller.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9032247)

Also, I've always seen the Melniboneans (sp?) as elves.

Me too. I think one of the issues of *Arcane* (remember that?) also drew the same parallel, I think in an article on making the stock fantasy races more interesting.

noisms

06-21-2008 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9032612)

Living in forests as they did, my elves didn't really develop a fire-and-metalworking culture and were closer to our jungle tribes than the fantasy stereotype, only with magic, obviously. They were also hugely protective of their habitats and hunted invaders remorselessly. Not hugely original, but more palatable to me than the usual annoyingly perfect and noble version.

Also, for some reason, I'd always thought of elves as being taller than humans, so it was quite a shock for me to com

to D&D and see them portrayed as smaller.

I always forget that too. I also always forget whether Tolkien elves are supposed to be taller or shorter than humans.

Quote:

Me too. I think one of the issues of *Arcane* (remember that?) also drew the same parallel, I think in an article on making the stock fantasy races more interesting.

I wish that magazine was still around. It's a sad indictment of the hobby that it can't support one single decent non-house-organ magazine.

bluejay

06-21-2008 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Tolkien Elves are generally slightly taller than Humans.

The more woodland Elves are tall and slender but the deep Elves (Noldor) are even taller and more solidly built (and dark haired and dark eyed).

It always struck me as strange that Tolkien's most interesting Elves were pretty much disregarded by the subsequent RPG knock-offs. Of course if he'd ended up calling them Gnomes, where would we be?

Anyhoo, Star Trek Vulcans seem to be derived from Tolkien Elves to a certain degree and seem to have fed back into the RPG collective consciousness as Elf prototypes.

brianm

06-21-2008 01:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9028579)

\Incidentally, since Nereids are basically the Succubi of the water elemental plane, I tend to think of them in a similar way - they're the spies and assassins, turning enemy agents rogue, infiltrating and recruiting. They claim to be exiles on the prime, sure, but that's really just cover. They're really high-ranked operatives in the war between the elements, distributing swords out of lakes, trapping druids in trees and recruiting agents for their lords.

~ jason

I love this! Agents of the marid in their long war against the dao and efreet. :D

- Brian

kelvingreen

06-21-2008 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032786)

I always forget that too. I also always forget whether Tolkien elves are supposed to be taller or shorter than humans.

I think the *Fighting Fantasy* elves might be taller than humans, and as that was my entry into the hobby, that might be where I got the idea. I think they're taller in *Shadowrun* too, so I'd imagine it's the same in *Earthdawn*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032786)

I wish that magazine was still around. It's a sad indictment of the hobby that it can't support one single decent non-house-organ magazine.

TSR killed it, as I recall. The vast majority of *Arcane*'s funding came through TSR advertising, so when the company folded, the magazine could no longer survive. :(

brianm

06-21-2008 01:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032013)

However, the legends of the destruction wrought by these elven women are rampant among the enemies of the elves." I'm not sure what to make of that - for some reason elven women riding unicorns and "wreaking destruction" don't really go together in my brain.

The horrors perpetrated by the Maiden far exceed those committed by the Mother, if only because her lack of life experience allows the Maiden to savage her foes without pity or remorse.

Shall a feud not begin for me?

Shall kith not kill their kin for me?

Oh, where are the trivial joys

Harmless, convivial joys

Where are the simple joys of maidenhood? :D

- Brian

KromeLizard

06-21-2008 01:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by bluejay (Post 9032817)

It always struck me as strange that Tolkien's most interesting Elves were pretty much disregarded by the subsequent RPG knock-offs.

That's because a whole lot of people can't read anything more difficult than the Hobbit.

noisms

06-21-2008 01:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by bluejay (Post 9032817)

Of course if he'd ended up calling them Gnomes, where would we be?

Now there's a thought. What would modern fantasy look like if Tolkien's elves had really been gnomes?

noisms

06-21-2008 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9032839)

I think the Fighting Fantasy elves might be taller than humans, and as that was my entry into the hobby, that might be where I got the idea. I think they're taller in Shadowrun too, so I'd imagine it's the same in Earthdawn.

Did you play any *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*? A friend and I used to play it a bit around the same time we were figuring out what D&D was; I still have all the books somewhere, as well as *Out of the Pit* and *Titan*.

kelvingreen

06-21-2008 04:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032949)

Did you play any Advanced Fighting Fantasy? A friend and I used to play it a bit around the same time we were figuring out what D&D was; I still have all the books somewhere, as well as Out of the Pit and Titan.

Yes, one of the first long-term games I ever ran was a year-and-a-bit *Dungeoneer* campaign. I do like the simplicity of the system, but it's horribly broken and unbalanced, so we just played it as an over the top just-for-laughs kind of thing. I never read *Blacksand* or *Allansia* though.

I'm resurrecting some of the old *Out of the Pit* monsters in a small campaign I'm putting together; I'm thinking of having a Gonchong takeover at the heart of the plot. ;)

JasonK

06-21-2008 05:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Milk (Post 9031944)

Oh, nice. As JasonK mentioned, making the link between a giant living storm and political manipulation is the toughie, but that works.

It really does, yes. I could get behind the herald thing.

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9032612)

Living in forests as they did, my elves didn't really develop a fire-and-metalworking culture and were closer to our jungle tribes than the fantasy stereotype, only with magic, obviously. They were also hugely protective of their habitats and hunted invaders remorselessly. Not hugely original, but more palatable to me than the usual annoyingly perfect and noble version.

I think in a "pure fantasy" sort of situation this works out pretty well. Elven forest raiders growing wooden swords and shields from the trees that give them life, stuff like that. But for me, honestly, this isn't... mythic enough.

In the same way that I shifted my dwarves away from clannish mine-dwellers and into trisky, greedy, crafty Mountain Kings, I want to take elves back to their proper roots. The problem, of course, is that properly-rooted "mythic" elves are "humans, only more attractive, a bit longer-lived and living where humans don't usually live."

I'm not sure where I'm going with this - let me think on it some more.

Quote:

Also, for some reason, I'd always thought of elves as being taller than humans, so it was quite a shock for me to come to *D&D* and see them portrayed as smaller.

I noticed that 4E has "fixed" this little oversight - elves and eladrin are now human height.

~ jason

kelvingreen

06-21-2008 05:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9034009)

I think in a "pure fantasy" sort of situation this works out pretty well. Elven forest raiders growing wooden swords and shields from the trees that give them life, stuff like that. But for me, honestly, this isn't... mythic enough.

Well, that's from when I was seventeen. :)

I've been thinking about bringing "elves" into one of my current games. They would live in a slightly different plane of reality, separated from the main gameworld by the very thinnest of planar boundaries; if you see something moving at the edge of your sight, it's probably something in that otherworld moving along. Landscape features and ancient things appear in both worlds, but that empty hill over there may host an elven building in their world. Sensitive individuals may feel it if they move through something that's impassable in the other world.

The elves are immortal, but they can't breed. Instead they steal infants from our world, and eventually these children are changed by the magic of the otherworld into full grown elves. Those who leave before this process is complete are half-elves.

It's just notes and half-formed ideas at this point, but I also became dissatisfied with classic elves and wanted to go for something closer to the mythological faerie.

glass

06-21-2008 06:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9032839)

I think the Fighting Fantasy elves might be taller than humans, and as that was my entry into the hobby, that might be where I got the idea. I think they're taller in Shadowrun too, so I'd imagine it's the same in Earthdawn.

WFRP too.

glass.

JasonK

06-21-2008 07:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9034171)

It's just notes and half-formed ideas at this point, but I also became dissatisfied with classic elves and wanted to go for something closer to the mythological faerie.

I did something like this for my homebrew world, actually. The only "elves" that exist for PCs are changeling-children - half-human, half-fae, raised either on earth or in the Fair Realm, but with one foot in each, regardless. I'd probably use Eladrin stats for them in 4E terms, while in 3.X I created something whole-cloth.

It's a pretty satisfying solution for my world, but doesn't really answer the central elf issue so much as avoids it altogether.

~ jason

kelvingreen

06-21-2008 07:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9034577)

It's a pretty satisfying solution for my world, but doesn't really answer the central elf issue so much as avoids it altogether.

Indeed, I wonder if there is a fix, or if we're forever stuck with the Rubbish Fantasy Elf?

noisms

06-21-2008 11:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9034679)

Indeed, I wonder if there is a fix, or if we're forever stuck with the Rubbish Fantasy Elf?

RFE for short.

I'm going to plot out a few ideas for (hopefully) non-rubbish fantasy elves over the next week or so on my blog.

weasel fierce

06-21-2008 12:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9034679)

Indeed, I wonder if there is a fix, or if we're forever stuck with the Rubbish Fantasy Elf?

depending how Tangency-ish you are..

Elvish holocaust ?

JasonK

06-21-2008 05:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9035388)

RFE for short.

I'm going to plot out a few ideas for (hopefully) non-rubbish fantasy elves over the next week or so on my blog.

I guess I'll be reading your blog for a while, then, as I toss around some ideas of my own that I'll likely post here (well, in a different thread, but still...) as they come to me.

~ jason

6inTruder

06-21-2008 06:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Was it just me what missed the Gus Van Sant movie?

noisms

06-21-2008 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9036196)

Was it just me what missed the Gus Van Sant movie?

Crap, I completely forgot about Elephants. Okay, I'll do them in the next entry.

Littleredfox

06-22-2008 01:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9032013)

Elf

who live an idyllic existence in a utopian-socialist woodland paradise and never ever make mistakes.

Which leads to the question of the cost of that paradise. Beyond the cost of black leather armour for the National Arboreal Singers and Druids Party stormtroopers, the little old grannies running thier networks of small woodland animal informers and the over the top denunciations of the gnomish problem from the Great Leader in all the scrying pools.

Consider how reliant they mst be on Augury and other divination if the society can claim to never make mistakes. Alternatively just how much glamour and illusion magic are they expending to keep people believing in thier infalibility. It explains why they need to keep death camping orcs and gnomes as blood sacrifices.

Lukas Sjöström

06-22-2008 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kromelizard (Post 9032885)

That's because a whole lot of people can't read anything more difficult than the Hobbit.

I wouldn't have anything against elves as portrayed in the Hobbit. Those are certainly flawed in their own way, the drunken bastards.

Wakboth

06-22-2008 03:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Not to disparage anyone in this thread, but I'm starting to find elf-hate just as annoying as elf-love, and the only thing more cliched (by now) than the oh-so-superior Goody elves are the racist rat-bastard Nasty elves. (It's the same thing as the assholish paladins, typified by Miko Miyazaki... ;))

Why can't people just let elves be *people*, with both good and bad sides?

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9037334)

Not to disparage anyone in this thread, but I'm starting to find elf-hate just as annoying as elf-love, and the only thing more cliched (by now) than the oh-so-superior Goody elves are the racist rat-bastard Nasty elves. (It's the same thing as the assholeish paladins, typified by Miko Miyazaki... ;))

Why can't people just let elves be people, with both good and bad sides?

Because that would make too much sense.

I kind of like one such interpretation of elves, though; They're magically mutagenic. They evolve incredibly slowly thanks to their generation gap being longer than a human lifetime, but they do have the ability to take advantage of natural magic around them within one or two generations, which is why there are so many types of elves for different ecosystems, and why elves construct big magical places to congregate around (whether those are just magical trees or Forgotten Realms style Mythals or even magical royalty); it's a form of genetic/magical manipulation meant to bring forward certain characteristics in the population.

Of course, there are often all kinds of unintended side effects. The Underdark is inhabited by so many aberrations that the Drow mindset becomes aberrant to normal survival strategies and often quite inhuman. The serene woodland types, on the other hand, start to think like trees, hence why they perceive the seasons so differently- long life has nothing to do with it.

It may be overthinking it, but it does lead to interesting possibilities. What would an urban elf be like? :p

Littleredfox

06-22-2008 05:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9037334)

Why can't people just let elves be people, with both good and bad sides?

Perhaps because traditionally elves are closer to vampires than any other mythical creature in powers and behaviour. Both are mindhacking semi immortal superhuman monsters with an odd set of allergies and a dislike for christian symbols.

Elves just have better PR. Call them the fair folk so they don't come round and stuff your spleen up your nose for a laugh and all that.

Putting them in the role of looking too good to be true seems normal after that sort of stuff. That they tend to be tall and blond makes a Nazi pastiche an obvious way of doing it.

Of course this could always be gnomish propaganda. The Protocols of the Elder Gnomes may in fact be an authentic copy of the gnomish master plan to scapegoat the elves as a stepping stone to conquering the world.

Elvish totalitarianism may be justified, or not. And makes for a more interesting place for the PC's to visit than an arboreal paradise. Players are more likely to find things to do running from The All-Elven Extraordinary Commission for Combating Arson, Thieves and Woodcutters or the Un-Elven Activities Committee than they are interacting with Lady Galdriel's Harp Quartet.

Mostly because players tend to like things they can try and blow up. And rescuing the elven proletariat from their evil overlords offers plenty of opportunity for mayhem.

Sleeper

06-22-2008 05:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9037334)

Why can't people just let elves be people, with both good and bad sides?

Because it's so much more fun to assume the last elvish nation was overrun by a horde of orcs and their vile necromantic lieges. The squads scoured the forest and rounded up the last straggling remnants of the elvish population, and hauled them back to the labs of their evil overlords. The wicked wizards and clerics then tortured the entire race, using their malign magics to keep their victims alive while they removed their spines and visera.

That didn't last long, in elvish terms. Within a 100 years, a nearby human empire rose to prominence. Their legions firebombed the forest, depleting their stockpile of hundreds or thousands of wands of fire. The victorious human magi took pity on the pathetic remnants of the once-slightly-less-pathetic race, and used a great spell to preserve them, albeit in their horribly mutilated state.

The remaining elves live among the scorched stumps of their former homeland, the ragged flaps of skin on their back sewn together over the gaping hollow where all their vital organs once where. Timid, fearful, frail, and unable to reproduce after a century of torment, they are treated like zoo animals or circus freaks. Dwarf, gnome, human, halfling and tourists of other races come to visit, to gawk, so they can tell their children they really did see the last of the elves. They nudge each other and mutter, "I thought they were supposed to be pretty?"

JasonK

06-22-2008 05:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, since we're having this discussion here... ;)

Here's the thing with elves. They live Beyond the Fields of Men, but the King of Elfland lives in a castle and has a beautiful daughter. In myth, elves always have always held the Dangerous Beauty of Perfection. In myth, they seduce you and they lie to you, but never with cruelty - only because they're the Other; their time is not our time, and their rules are not our rules.

Now turn that into a PC race. Turn that into a PC race when man has long-since mastered the Deep Woods of your reality and they're no longer scary; in a time when nothing is really Other to you. It's hard to keep the alien-ness, the sense of different priorities and lies of ignorance. How do you make that come across in a race write-up? How do you get folks to play that?

Well, maybe you can't. So you leave it all out, and just stick with the surface. So you get these impossibly beautiful, impossibly perfect creatures, and the stagnation and illusion beneath never gets exposed. At least, not until players have a bad reaction to what they see and take it entirely too far in the other direction and you get Fascist Elves.

The question, I figure, is how to find a happy middle-ground.

~ jason

noisms

06-22-2008 10:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9037334)

Why can't people just let elves be people, with both good and bad sides?

I agree, which is why I like Tolkien's Noldor: Despite their obvious good points, they ended up destroying paradise in the name of idiotic pride.

I like what JasonK had to say in the post above this one. D&D Elves went too far one way (ultra-good), so there is sometimes an equally strong counter reaction (making them ultra-bad).

I think that's why you rarely see evil, fascist Dwarves depicted in D&D settings. Dwarves are already quite well balanced; they're good, but at the same time their flaws - greed, xenophobia, bloody-mindedness - are readily apparent. This makes them more believable and more sympathetic, to my eyes, and means there doesn't end up being such a strong backlash as there is with Elves.

noisms

06-22-2008 01:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elephant

As with the Dolphin, I'm not entirely sure why Elephants get their own entry rather than coming under the Mammal one. Are Elephants really that popular or interesting? Still, it's a welcome return to MM writers trying to describe real-world animals that everybody knows about anyway: "Elephants have thick, baggy hides, covered with sparse and very coarse tufts of gray hair. The elephant's most renowned feature is its trunk, which it uses as a grasping limb." Hmm... A 'trunk', you say?

The entry tries to pass Elephants off as peaceful herbivores. I suspect PETA girl's influence again, because really, who wants to include Elephants in a D&D game unless they're going to be a) trampling people to death or b) being used as war-steeds (and trampling people to death)? Also, I've seen documentaries, and I know Elephants ain't no peaceful herbivores. They're violent, aggressive beasts who kill hundreds of people every year.

On the other hand, the entry is neutral about the ivory trade, as bird entries are with egg-thieving. I agree with that, of course (I hate it when modern day sensibilities intrude into a fantasy about medieval cultures) but I wonder what PETA girl had to say about allowing PCs to sell Elephant tusks for 600gps a pop.

Also included are:

Mammoths - basically a bigger, hairier, meaner variety, whose tusks are 50% more expensive than an Elephant's.

Mastadons - almost exactly the same as a Mammoth.

Oliphants - ripped off from Tolkien's Oliphaunt, these have shorter tusks which are only worth 100-400 gps.

Naxuul

06-22-2008 02:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Did you skip over Aquatic Elves and Drow, Noism?

-Naxuul

noisms

06-22-2008 04:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 9038982)
Did you skip over Aquatic Elves and Drow, Noism?

-Naxuul

No: I forgot about Elephants - technically they should come before Elves - so I changed the order around just for that entry. I'll be doing Aquatic Elves and Drow next.

Sleeper

06-22-2008 04:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9038783)
Oliphants - ripped off from Tolkien's Oliphaunt, these have shorter tusks which are only worth 100-400 gps.

Samwise described them as "big as a hill", but at least the 1st edition version from the MM2 was *smaller* than a normal elephant (fewer HD). It's more charitable to say both Tolkien and D&D drew from the same sources, since oliphant is a very common archaic version of the word "elephant". The medieval musical instrument made from a tusk is even called an "olifant", most famously in the Song of Roland.

Sounds like 2E continued to carry on the myth that mastodons and mammoths were larger than modern elephants. In reality, mastodons and most mammoths were comparable in size to the Asiatic elephant, and only the very largest species of mammoth exceeded the modern African bush or savanna elephant in size. The specimen mounted in the Smithsonian is one of the largest land mammals that ever lived.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9039129)

Samwise described them as "big as a hill", but at least the 1st edition version from the MM2 was smaller than a normal elephant (fewer HD). It's more charitable to say both Tolkien and D&D drew from the same sources, since oliphant is a very common archaic version of the word "elephant". The medieval musical instrument made from a tusk is even called an "olifant", most famously in the Song of Roland.

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I'm learning a lot from this thread.

Until yesterday I didn't even know there was a difference between mastodons and mammoths. Now you tell me that they weren't even very big!

Wakboth

06-22-2008 09:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9038438)

I agree, which is why I like Tolkien's Noldor: Despite their obvious good points, they ended up destroying paradise in the name of idiotic pride.

Thinking about it, the Noldor seem like a very good model for Exalted: larger than life, yet still very much human, and with deep, massive, character-defining flaws to offset their tremendous potential.

Quote:

I think that's why you rarely see evil, fascist Dwarves depicted in D&D settings. Dwarves are already quite well balanced; they're good, but at the same time their flaws - greed, xenophobia, bloody-mindedness - are readily apparent. This makes them more believable and more sympathetic, to my eyes, and means there doesn't end up being such a strong backlash as there is with Elves.

Very good point. And the polarization between good and evil dwarves is nowhere near as strong as it is with elves and drow; the duergar are just dwarves with their bad sides emphasized, whereas the drow are presented as anti-elves.

I expect we'll see more discussion about this, once you hit the drow. :)

Sleeper

06-22-2008 09:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9039517)
I'm learning a lot from this thread.

Until yesterday I didn't even know there was a difference between mastodons and mammoths. Now you tell me that they weren't even very big!

They *were* very big. Excluding the dwarf species, they weighed several times as much as the 2nd and 3rd largest land mammals alive today (the hippo and the white rhino are in a dead heat). And while the largest land mammal of all time is basically a giant hornless rhino with too many names, the next couple slots are all proboscideans.

But the modern Asiatic and African forest elephants are pretty good sized as elephants go, and the African bush elephant is definitely on the large side.

DMH

06-23-2008 04:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

They didn't give the elephants a swim speed. Watching them cross a river that is deeper than they are tall is a bit strange- usually only their trunks are visible.

Pastor Dick

06-23-2008 10:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Notice that the 2e elephant is the pachyderm equivalent of a ninja.

kelvingreen

06-23-2008 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pastor Dick (Post 9041340)
Notice that the 2e elephant is the pachyderm equivalent of a ninja.

I thought that was the 3.Xe version?

(See discussion of elephant paladin of Ganesh about four pages back)

The Last Conformist

06-23-2008 10:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9039517)
I'm learning a lot from this thread.

Until yesterday I didn't even know there was a difference between mastodons and mammoths. Now you tell me that they weren't even very big!

Something that perhaps needs to be stated more clearly: there were many different species of mammoths and mastodons. The smallest mammoth species were smaller than any of the living elephants; the largest larger. I'm less familiar with mastodons, but I don't think any of them exceeded the African bush elephant in size.

Lugh

06-23-2008 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9037334)
Why can't people just let elves be people, with both good and bad sides?

Because then they're just humans with pointy ears. Elves have no significant physical distinction from humans, other than unearthly beauty and extended life span. Hence, to make them actually *different*, they have to have a significantly different culture. Given that most of us are not master storytellers, capable of sketching the subtle differences into nuances of speech and attitude that highlight the alien while keeping the familiar, we paint in broad strokes. And, alignment is the simplest palette D&D has to work with.

bluejay

06-24-2008 12:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

To follow up on Lugh's point, often these kind of Elvish archetypes (Tolkien's Elves, Star Trek Vulcans, etc) are used to help define what we value about our humanity by showing a society which lacks certain aspects (or exaggerates others).

noisms

06-24-2008 01:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elf, Aquatic

Aquatic Elves are basically High Elves, but under water; their abilities are essentially the same, but given an 'aquatic' twist - so that Aquatics are good with tridents instead of bows, good at hiding inside seaweed instead of woodland, etc. Their favourite method of attack is to entangle opponents in nets, and they often employ the dreaded Very Intelligent Dolphins as pets - although the MM is quick to point out that the Dolphins are actually "companions" rather than just animals. Tch.

There are a large number of those mysterious plot hook hints that we all know and love in this entry:

- Magic - "On some worlds" Sea Elves are unable to cast spells. I'm assuming that's because in some published campaign settings Sea Elves can't be spellcasters, whereas in some they can? But interestingly, there is a legend among such Sea Elves that their magic was stolen from them by the Drow in eons past; that sounds like an overarching plot for a series of adventures if ever there was one. Intrepid adventurers setting off to restore the Sea Elves' lost magic - this is the stuff pulp fantasy is made of.
- Sahuagin - Sea Elves "generate a passion for conflict with the sahuagin that surprises even themselves" (?), and will take any opportunity to kill them (and to kill sharks). This rather jibes with all the high-minded stuff at the beginning of the entry about how peaceful and live-and-let live Sea Elves are. But it would be quite fun for a group of PCs to stumble across a full-on war between Aquatic Elves and Sahuagin.
- Malenti - these are rare Sahuagin children who, for some reason, are born to look exactly like an Aquatic Elf. This only happens if Sea Elves are present within a mile of the Sahuagin parents. The Malenti is an evil Sahuagin in mind, but an Elf in body, and if it gives birth to offspring (by shagging a Sahuagin) then said offspring will be Malenti too. In this way entire communities of Sahuagin can end up becoming Malenti. That would be a fun encounter for an underwater adventure - a band of Malenti who roam the seas, enslaving foolish humanoids who let their guard down when they see a pack of apparent Sea Elves floating about.
- "An aquatic elf who makes a promise will carry out his obligation unto death. Should he be killed before he can succeed, his entire band will work to see that the promise is fulfilled. On the other hand, aquatic elves do not accept promises from non-elven characters. The sea elves know that they are the only race with the honor to carry out the duties of its dead members. And, besides, only elves live long enough to guarantee that they will have the time to fulfill a vow."
- Lastly, Sea Elf legends tell of another race of Aquatic Elves who can shapechange into sea otters or dolphins - but such races "have never been found".

Whitemagebishieboy

06-24-2008 02:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9042768)

Because then they're just humans with pointy ears. Elves have no significant physical distinction from humans. other than unearthly beauty and extended life span. Hence, to make them actually different, they have to have a significantly different culture. Given that most of us are not master storytellers, capable of sketching the subtle differences into nuances of speech and attitude that highlight the alien while keeping the familiar, we paint in broad strokes. And, alignment is the simplest palette D&D has to work with.

This, there not human. Ergo there psychology should be fundamentally different, is it so hard to comprehend a non-human intelligence with biological programing that leans toward one alignment over another? I argue that humans are biologically lawful in D&D terms.

Sleeper

06-24-2008 02:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 9044703)
I argue that humans are biologically lawful in D&D terms.

On a tangential note, I tend to wince everytime someone says that the races in D&D aren't races, but species. Magic makes no sense in a scientific paradigm, so using a modern understanding of biology and even psychology to justify elements of a fantasy setting is no more rational than just using a metaphorical explanation -- and basing it on magical thinking and dream logic is actually truer to the original source material. Though that's an entirely separate discussion.

But elves as greys (or mi-go, to mix in a little Delta Green) could be interesting cross-genre mix.

Whitemagebishieboy

06-24-2008 03:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9044739)
On a tangential note, I tend to wince everytime someone says that the races in D&D aren't races, but species. Magic makes no sense in a scientific paradigm, so using a modern understanding of biology and even psychology to justify elements of a fantasy setting is no more rational than just using a metaphorical explanation -- and basing it on magical thinking and dream logic is actually truer to the original source material. Though that's an entirely separate discussion.

Naturally? Psychologically? Inherently? I can use different terms if you'd like, but humans in D&D are supposed to be human thus i'd assume they think the same way we do, while an elf, dwarf or other race/monster/critter/abomination would have an alien mind set. They are after all not human, and human is more about how we think than merely what we look like.

David J Prokopetz

06-24-2008 03:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 9044804)
Naturally? Psychologically? Inherently? I can use different terms if you'd like, but humans in D&D are supposed to be human thus i'd assume they think the same way we do, while an elf, dwarf or other race/monster/critter/abomination would have an alien mind set. They are after all not human, and human is more about how we think than merely what we look like.

There's no reason to presume that this is the case, tho', unless you're playing with definitions and claiming that anything with a mindset that sufficiently resembles that of a real-world human qualifies as human, regardless of gross physiology.

Sleeper

06-24-2008 03:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 9044804)

Naturally? Psychologically? Inherently? I can use different terms if you'd like, but humans in D&D are supposed to be human thus i'd assume they think the same way we do, while an elf, dwarf or other race/monster/critter/abomination would have an alien mind set. They are after all not human, and human is more about how we think than merely what we look like.

Like I said it was a tangent, so it wasn't really aimed at your post at all. But it's not the terminology that's an issue. There's a difference between an exotic human culture using a modern understanding of the social sciences like anthropology (Tekumel has some good examples), an attempt to project a possible alien culture developed by a non-human physiology and environment (good sf), and a creature that is a metaphorical representation of an aspect of humanity that creates an emotional resonance in those hearing about it (like in most of the original legends and myths). There's a tendency to prefer the first two and dismiss the last one as illogical, but that's a modern bias. Magic inherently clashes with a scientific approach, and while a pseudo-scientific explanation may create a degree of verisimilitude for some people, it's no less illogical than adopting the non-scientific approach wholesale.

JasonK

06-24-2008 04:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9044668)

- Sahuagin - Sea Elves "generate a passion for conflict with the sahuagin that surprises even themselves" (?), and will take any opportunity to kill them (and to kill sharks). This rather jibes with all the high-minded stuff at the beginning of the entry about how peaceful and live-and-let live Sea Elves are. But it would be quite fun for a group of PCs to stumble across a full-on war between Aquatic Elves and Sahuagin.
- Malenti - these are rare Sahuagin children who, for some reason, are born to look exactly like an Aquatic Elf. This only happens if Sea Elves are present within a mile of the Sahuagin parents. The Malenti is an evil Sahuagin in mind, but an Elf in body, and if it gives birth to offspring (by shagging a Sahuagin) then said offspring will be Malenti too. In this way entire communities of Sahuagin can end up becoming Malenti. That would be a fun encounter for an underwater adventure - a band of Malenti who roam the seas, enslaving foolish humanoids who let their guard down when they see a pack of apparent Sea Elves floating about.

Generally, I have an unreasoning hatred of the "just like our land-based cousins, only in the water" races, but these two little snippets make my mind reel. This is one of those bits of D&D mythology that I've carried at the forefront of my mind for ages now. I have yet to make use of it (underwater adventures? Not really for me.), but it's too good not to keep in mind.

Quote:

Lastly, Sea Elf legends tell of another race of Aquatic Elves who can shapechange into sea otters or dolphins - but such races "have never been found".

Lies! They both totally showed up in the 2E Dragonlance boxed set. :)

~ jason

kelvingreen

06-24-2008 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9044668)

[]Malenti - these are rare Sahuagin children who, for some reason, are born to look exactly like an Aquatic Elf. This only happens if Sea Elves are present within a mile of the Sahuagin parents.*

The Malenti are one of the best *D&D* ideas, and one that's never, to my knowledge, been explained away. It's just sitting there in the *MM*, tempting the adventurous GM. What's perhaps most interesting is that the Sahuagin don't realise what they have in the Malenti, and kill them at birth, when they could raise them as spies or assassins.

Deadmanwalking

06-24-2008 05:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9045057)

The Malenti are one of the best D&D ideas, and one that's never, to my knowledge, been explained away. It's just sitting there in the MM, tempting the adventurous GM. What's perhaps most interesting is that the Sahuagin don't realise what they have in the Malenti, and kill them at birth, when they could raise them as spies or assassins.

Only sometimes, there's mention of doing that too, if I recall correctly.

And yeah, really fun idea.

andreww

06-24-2008 05:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9045057)

The Malenti are one of the best D&D ideas, and one that's never, to my knowledge, been explained away. It's just sitting there in the MM, tempting the adventurous GM. What's perhaps most interesting is that the Sahuagin don't realise what they have in the Malenti, and kill them at birth, when they could raise them as spies or assassins.

There is a similar sort of idea in the old Shadow Elves Gazetteer for BECMI.

The shadow elves (decidedly not drow) occasionally give birth to deformed children (they have a nuclear power plant, seriously!). They leave such children in tunnels away from their homes where they are sometimes found and raised by local tribes of humanoids. Because they are generally smarter they often end up leading those tribes.

kelvingreen

06-24-2008 06:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 9045066)

Only sometimes, there's mention of doing that too, if I recall correctly.

Not in the *MM*, as far as I remember, but I often remember poorly. ;)

Deadmanwalking

06-24-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9045185)

Not in the MM, as far as I remember, but I often remember poorly. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by 2E MM, p. 111

"Most of the time these offspring, known as malenti, are eaten by their parents. Once in a great while, a malenti is allowed to live to adulthood because its physical resemblance to an aquatic elf, in combination with its sahuagin upbringing and attitude, make it an ideal spy in elven communities."

So yeah, it actually is mentioned.

Oh, and this is another passage that makes great story fodder:

Quote:

Originally Posted by 2E MM, p. 111

"Few aquatic elves believe in the existence of malenti, as they suggest some disturbing possibilities about sahuagin origins."

That explains the "generate a passion for conflict with the sahuagin that surprises even themselves" line somewhat, and sets the sahuagin up as aquatic drow/driders which is, in fact, really cool. Particularly if the PCs discover it in-game and the aquatic elves need to be convinced of it so as not to be utterly infiltrated with malenti saboteurs...

DMH

06-24-2008 08:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The concept of malenti could be applied to many other races. Elves and orcs might hate each other because they cause similar mutations. Kobolds are reptiles unless within so many miles of (uh, is there any dog people?) and then hatch as mammals or the reverse.

Hmm, how about making elves and dwarves mutant humans- those born within forests or on mountains. If they have children elsewhere, they are born human.

kelvingreen

06-24-2008 08:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 9045312)

So yeah, it actually is mentioned.

Okay, okay, I said I often remember poorly; your pedant-fu is strong. ;)

sim_james

06-24-2008 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9044668)

Lastly, Sea Elf legends tell of another race of Aquatic Elves who can shapechange into sea otters or dolphins - but such races "have never been found".

Dimernesti and Dargonesti respectively - the Dargonesti in particular got a lot of fleshing out in Dragonlance supplements.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Whitemagebishieboy (Post 9044703)

I argue that humans are biologically lawful in D&D terms.

Agreed.

Most elves in Dragonlance were pretty lawful too, the stiff-necked bastards!

noisms

06-24-2008 10:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9045432)

Hmm, how about making elves and dwarves mutant humans- those born within forests or on mountains. If they hav children elsewhere, they are born human.

You really could be onto something there. That's a really interesting twist on demihuman races. Of course you'd have to explain halflings too.

Littleredfox

06-24-2008 11:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9044668)

Elf, Aquatic

although the MM is quick to point out that the Dolphins are actually "companions" rather than just animals. Tch.

Which leads to the possibilities of either an Aquatic Tardis or Geisha Dolphins.

Or that the Docotrs Companions all reincarnate as dolphins. Which might explain a few of the Very Intelligent Dolphin traits.

"Squee Klick Klick Squee Klick" [Trans: Benson, Big Chap with Four Arms, Five Rounds Rapid.]

DMH

06-25-2008 08:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9045698)

You really could be onto something there. That's a really interesting twist on demihuman races. Of course you'd have to explain halflings too.

Halflingland? ;)

I wouldn't use plains as standard humans already fill those. A quantity or quality of food would be good for their size but not their culture. For all the near humans, maybe there are just regions where magic causes certain kinds of humanoids to be born.

Or relics of the body of the first whatever must be within 100 miles. So if you want to expand, you have to chip the bone or cut the hair even smaller (to a point and then 1 location is screwed since their relic was destroyed).

noisms

06-25-2008 10:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Elf, Drow

Yep, we've reached *that* entry. It doesn't seem worth holding forth on my feelings for the Drow, as you probably have your own feelings on the race already set in stone; suffice to say, "Do. Not. Want."

Thankfully, there are a few points of interest in the entry:

- Drow have a system of sign language, with which, by combining with changes of facial expression, they can communicate very effectively. An interesting idea, and it raises the question of sign language in a D&D game. In all my D&D games over the course of 14 years or so, I don't think I've ever had two characters in a party who could use sign language to communicate. That's unusual, because when you think about it it's a very useful skill. It also gives me an idea: spell casting has a vocal component, right? But what if somebody were to come up with a system of magic in which the 'magic words' were invoked through sign language? Could a dumb mage exist? Or a mage who could cast spells even if magically *silenced*?
- Drow really are stupidly overpowered; how is it that an *entire race* are able to make *all of their armour and shields* out of the vanishingly rare metal adamantite?
- "Drow live in magnificently dark, gloomy cities in the underworld that few humans or demihumans ever see. They construct their buildings entirely out of stone and minerals, carved into weird, fantastic shapes. Those few surface creatures that have seen a dark elf city (and returned to tell the tale) report that it is the stuff of which nightmares are made." Well, okay, leaving aside the cheesy cliché, how is it that a race of murderous devils who "all scramble for power" and for whom "violent conflict is a part of everyday life" were able to cooperate long enough to build these cities? That's not a facetious question; I'd like to hear ideas. My own way of explaining it is that Drow cities were not really built by the Drow - they are ancient ruins of cities built

eons ago by a long-forgotten race, and which the Drow are merely occupying. And what if, someday, that race were to return...?

- "The Drow believe that the strongest should rule; their rigid class system, with a long and complicated list of titles and prerogatives, is based on the idea." This doesn't make sense. If the Drow believe that the strongest should rule, then surely that is incompatible with a rigid class system, because believing that the strongest should rule is really just a form of meritocracy.
- Drow artifacts dissolve in sunlight. I think this was put into the game as a way to prevent players getting their hands on such artifacts in the long term, which strikes me as annoying. I've always hated it when DMs prevent their PCs from using NPCs' and monsters' special weapons ("No! You can't use the wizard saxinraxin's wand because....as soon as you touch it it turns to dust!") and this seems like that tendency writ large across an entire race of being.

Drider

A Drider is a Drow that has failed a "special test" set for him or her by Lolth, and so has been turned into a spider-centaur (arachnataur?). They are treated as outcasts by the Drow and mostly hang out with giant spiders. I was once involved in a game in which we (the PCs) teamed up with a Drider to help him get revenge on a group of Drow brigands. Good times.

kelvingreen

06-25-2008 11:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049659)

My own way of explaining it is that Drow cities were not really built by the Drow - they are ancient ruins of cities built eons ago by a long-forgotten race, and which the Drow are merely occupying. And what if, someday, that race were to return...?

Drizzt sandwiches.

Apart from being even more infuriatingly poncey than normal elves, I was always slightly put off by the fact that the predominant (if not only) matriarchal society in *D&D* is also irredeemably evil.

The Last Conformist

06-25-2008 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Drow really are stupidly overpowered; how is it that an entire race are able to make all of their armour and shields out of the vanishingly rare metal adamantite?

Clearly, adamantite is vanishingly rare *because* the Drow are hogging just about all of it. :p

Kapten

06-25-2008 11:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Every description of the drow make them feel Lawful to me. I can't fathom why they have Chaotic Evil as alignment. Maybe because it's the most 'Evil' of the Evil alignments but it's still weak.

Pitch black elves that live underground is from Scandinavian folktales and myths* so I'm with the drow that far. What I don't like is the huge underground cities, the religion of the drow and the way they generally are so detailed that they go from a mythological feel to something from a bad study in anthropology.

*The word "svartalv/svartalf" means literally "black elf". Not much is known about them except that they are pitch black, greedy, evil and live underground. There is some theories that dwarves and svartalvs are the same creature in the sagas (dwarves in the sagas are generally on the dark grey scale of morality). Also, when on the subject: It's not svartalfar!! I see this a lot of times. Plural form in the Scandinavian languages is -er, not -ar.

Sleeper

06-25-2008 11:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049659)

"Drow live in magnificently dark, gloomy cities in the underworld that few humans or demihumans ever see. They construct their buildings entirely out of stone and minerals, carved into weird, fantastic shapes. Those few surface creatures that have seen a dark elf city (and returned to tell the tale) report that it is the stuff of which nightmares are made." Well, okay, leaving aside the cheesy cliché, how is it that a race of murderous devils who "all scramble for power" and for whom "violent conflict is a part of everyday life" were able to cooperate long enough to build these cities? That's not a facetious question; I'd like to hear ideas. My own way of explaining it is that Drow cities were not really built by the Drow - they are ancient ruins of cities built eons ago by a long-forgotten race, and which the Drow are merely occupying. And what if, someday, that race were to return...?"

Think Project Runway or Top Chef except with architecture. A race of emo-goth interior decorators who enslave entire races to fulfill their artistic whims. Where being pretty and popular is everything. Fierce.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049659)

"The Drow believe that the strongest should rule; their rigid class system, with a long and complicated list of titles and prerogatives, is based on the idea." This doesn't make sense. If the Drow believe that the strongest should rule, then surely that is incompatible with a rigid class system, because believing that the strongest should rule is really just a form of meritocracy.

I imagine it is a meritocracy, overall. But there's no sense of fair play. If you start with a rich and powerful mom, you're going to use that influence to give you a leg up on things.

That has interesting consequences. Drow only respect force of arms, and force of personality. A house would last only as long as there is a strong and charismatic leader to hold them together. Every generation, there's a major shakeup. Houses are founded, and then cast down when the leader is slain or past her prime, and in the following chaos new houses are founded and come into prominence. Due to their longevity, this could last

hundreds of years. But it's almost never more than a single generation. There are no real dynasties or legacies; the children lap at their powerful parent's feet and use and abuse that influence, but most of them live in terror not just of their mother but of her death, because they know if their house appears to weaken even a little bit, the other houses will swarm like spiders and devour them. And then all those privileged children will be put to the sword or spell. A few of the more talented might juggle a web of loyalties, and pledge their allegiance to another rising house and survive that way. But not many. And once every couple generations, a strong daughter might be able to hold her mother's house together for another generation, but this would be vanishingly rare.

So you end up with a caste of spoiled rich kids, who know they're all going to be slaughtered when mom starts getting old and weak. Some abuse their positions horribly, living for the moment. Some scramble to make alliances, in the probably-futile attempt to survive the forthcoming interregnum. The other drow look at them with hungry and jealous eyes, waiting for the chance to kill them all.

noisms

06-25-2008 11:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9049756)
Drizzt sandwiches.

Apart from being even more infuriatingly poncey than normal elves, I was always slightly put off by the fact that the predominant (if not only) matriarchal society in D&D is also irredeemably evil.

I noticed that too, actually.

I sometimes devote some thought to a little pet theory I have about male RPG designers. I call it the Male Game Designer And Their Attitudes To Women Threefold Model (MGDATATWTM, or MugDataTwutum, for short).

- 1.) The first strand of designers are normal in the broad sense; i.e. they just like making fun games. These are the Normals.
- 2.) The secondary strand worry unduly that there aren't many female role players, because it means they have no chance to meet women. So they misguidedly create races like the Drow in the hope that it'll attract girls to the game. Preferably hot, bisexual girls. These are the Frustrated.
- 3.) The third strand are called the Masochists. Like the anime artists who draw waif-like chicks with huge broadswords and the creators of Electra, these are designers who for whatever reason get a kick out of seeing women overpower men. It isn't enough for them to create a sensible matriarchal society; the only such society they can envisage is a terrifying, murderous, predatory, dysfunctional one. And yet one gets the sense that they would rather like to live in it.

The Normals wouldn't have created the Drow, but while they are the most numerous strand, they are disunited and find it difficult to counteract the combined efforts of the Frustrated and the Masochists. This is why races like the Drow exist.

Of course, the alternative is Blue Rose. Surely somebody somewhere must have come up with a believable, realistic matriarchal society in a role playing game?

glass

06-26-2008 12:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9044739)

On a tangential note, I tend to wince everytime someone says that the races in D&D aren't races, but species.

Especially since, even if we are going by biology, humans and elves (at least) are the same species because they are inter-fertile.

glass.

The Last Conformist

06-26-2008 12:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9049811)

Also, when on the subject: It's not svartalfar!! I see this a lot of times. Plural form in the Scandinavian languages is -er, not -ar.

Actually, "elves" in Icelandic (and Old Norse, which is essentially medieval Icelandic) is *álfar* with -ar (sg *álfur*, Old Norse sg *álfr*). Modern Swedish has *alver* or *alfer*, Danish *alfer*, Norwegian *alver*(Bokmål) or *alvar* (Nynorsk).

(Source: the articles about Elves in the Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian versions of Wikipedia.)

Lukas Sjöström

06-26-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9049811)

Every description of the drow make them feel Lawful to me. I can't fathom why they have Chaotic Evil as alignment. Maybe because it's the most 'Evil' of the Evil alignments but it's still weak.

Pitch black elves that live underground is from Scandinavian folktales and myths so I'm with the drow that far. What I don't like is the huge underground cities, the religion of the drow and the way they generally are so detailed that they go from a mythological feel to something from a bad study in anthropology.*

**The word "svartalv/svartalf" means literally "black elf". Not much is known about them except that they are pitch*

black, greedy, evil and live underground. There is some theories that dwarves and svartalvs are the same creature in the sagas (dwarves in the sagas are generally on the dark grey scale of morality). Also, when on the subject: It's not svartalfar!! I see this a lot of times. Plural form in the Scandinavian languages is -er, not -ar.

Actually, the "svartr" that is used to describe dark elves of Nordic folklore refers to hair, not skin (in the same way that "blond" only refers to hair). They're also described as "fölr", that is, corpse-pale. This isn't very surprising, since elves were, in their role as earth-spirits, associated with death. Even less surprising if you consider the fact that they were created from the maggots of Ymir's flesh.

(un)reason

06-26-2008 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9050027)

Especially since, even if we are going by biology, humans and elves (at least) are the same species because they are inter-fertile.

glass.

Yes, but by that logic, dragons and virtually everything are the same species. Which, yeah, doesn't really work. Magic makes sensible genetics go out the window.

On drow. They're a pretty good example of the fact that chaotic races can still build societies, simply because the lessers are sensible enough to know when to lick boot rather than be killed. That and while they may hate each other, there are plenty of other species around that they hate even more. It's amazing how dysfunctional family dynamics can get without breaking down entirely, and thats just in the real world.

Malignant Marionette

06-26-2008 01:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049819)

The Normals wouldn't have created the Drow

Oh come on. They're a subterranean spider-worshipping race where the priesthood holds all the power and only women are allowed in. No magical strapon of penetration +5 or anal circumference scores. Saying stuff like them would've been created by either sexually frustrated nerds or dumbasses giggling to themselves because of the ruckus their new race will create just isn't cool.

I for one see the drow as a welcome (although nowadays somewhat overused) change from the nondescript elf subrace which gives me a stat bonus in whatever I need to make the most munchkin character or yet another wizard-created monster of random bits. More different and quirky fleshed-out races with a fantastic feel like

drow, illithid and sahuagin for me please.

As for Drizzt, the books can be left unread and fanboys who won't shut up about him or who want to play a good drow can be smacked.

noisms

06-26-2008 01:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9050219)

Oh come on. They're a subterranean spider-worshipping race where the priesthood holds all the power and only women are allowed in. No magical strap-ons of penetration +5 or anal circumference scores. Saying stuff like them would've been created by either sexually frustrated nerds or dumbasses giggling to themselves because of the ruckus. Their new race will create just isn't cool.

I didn't say anything about dumbasses giggling about ruckuses. And hey, the only reason there were no magical strap-ons of penetration +5 is because D&D is a parental guidance deal. ;)

In all seriousness I didn't really mean that the Normals wouldn't have created the Drow. That was a poorly worded sentence. What I meant was that the Normals wouldn't have created the Drow as the malicious matriarchy of spider-worshippers which they are. I mean, the associations between femme fatales and poisonous spiders is pretty well established.

Kapten

06-26-2008 02:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kahyrn (Post 9050163)

Actually, the "svartr" that is used to describe dark elves of Nordic folklore refers to hair, not skin (in the same way that "blond" only refers to hair). They're also described as "fölr", that is, corpse-pale. This isn't very surprising, since elves were, in their role as earth-spirits, associated with death. Even less surprising if you consider the fact that they were created from the maggots of Ymir's flesh.

What is your source? Not that I don't trust you, I'm interested in learning more about them! The book I read just stated that very little is known about them and that they are black skinned. Sort of like Surt.

Malignant Marionette

06-26-2008 02:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9050272)
I didn't say anything about dumbasses giggling about ruckuses.

That referred to the masochists. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9050272)
In all seriousness I didn't really mean that the Normals wouldn't have created the Drow.

What I meant was that the Normals wouldn't have created the Drow as the malicious matriarchy of spider-worshippers which they are.

But would drow really be drow without the whole evil matriarchy who considers them superior to men? And more importantly, why wouldn't the normals (Actually referring to some people as 'the normals' feels actually kinda creepy. :o) design them as such? Is it just because of the sexual undertones? If so, would designing a fantasy culture based on some real-life culture where, say, women are considered property or less human or something similar be something a normal wouldn't do?

I'm not saying the drow or something like them couldn't have been created by people like the ones you mentioned. I'm just concerned about why they couldn't have been created by perfectly normal, well-adjusted people.

ogier300

06-26-2008 03:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

* Drow really are stupidly overpowered; how is it that an entire race are able to make all of their armour and shield out of the vanishingly rare metal adamantite?

Electroplating, I bet. That authentic adamantine chain mail is really just regular chain mail with a thin layer of adamantite on it to prevent the Underdark fungus from growing on it.

Quote:

Well, okay, leaving aside the cheesy cliché, how is it that a race of murderous devils who "all scramble for power" and for whom "violent conflict is a part of everyday life" were able to cooperate long enough to build these cities? That's not a facetious question; I'd like to hear ideas.

I imagine competitive work teams of Drow, fighting to be the first to complete the project. The reason the architecture is so unusual, weird and the stuff on nightmares is because the buildings are constructed in short bursts by different parties of Drow and their slaves who end up being driven off by other Drow work parties in a constant struggle to be the one to complete the building. Each work party has its own vision of what the building should look like and works hard to make the building conform ... but no one group ever has enough

time to complete an entire building on its own.

The party travelling through the Underdark stumbles onto a Drow village in the middle of being constructed and finds a dozen different groups engaged in a death struggle to put the shingles on the roof and drywall the interior.

Quote:

This doesn't make sense. If the Drow believe that the strongest should rule, then surely that is incompatible with a rigid class system, because believing that the strongest should rule is really just a form of meritocracy.

Perhaps it's the strongest in each class that rules that class, but is not permitted to rule or change into another class. A might-makes-right meritocracy inside each rigid class division...

Quote:

Drow artifacts dissolve in sunlight.

A terrible side effect of the electroplating process. They would have fixed the problem, but the competitive teams working on the project killed each other while battling to assemble to the magical lab they planned to work in.

kelvingreen

06-26-2008 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9050528)

I'm not saying the drow or something like them couldn't have been created by people like the ones you mentioned. I'm just concerned about why they couldn't have been created by perfectly normal, well-adjusted people.

The one major female-led society in the game is evil and depraved. Whether deliberate or not, that's not particularly normal and well-adjusted.

The only other *D&D* matriarchal society I can think of off the top of my head is the Githyanki, and that's ruled by a paranoid witch who consumes the souls of her own people. It's not the best way to dispel the perception that this is a male hobby for guys who don't understand women.

Inyssius

06-26-2008 03:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9050616)

The one major female-led society in the game is evil and depraved. Whether deliberate or not, that's not particularly normal and well-adjusted.

The only other D&D matriarchal society I can think of off the top of my head is the Githyanki, and that's ruled by a paranoid witch who consumes the souls of her own people. It's not the best way to dispel the perception that this is a male hobby for guys who don't understand women.

The other D&D matriarchal society I think of off the top of my head? Gnolls. Lazy, cruel, vicious psychopaths with claws and fangs, coated in grime and filth, stinking of blood and excrement; savage, depraved, cannibalistic demon-worshipper hyena-barbarians with no redeeming features unless you count "good at fighting".

That help?

Wakboth

06-26-2008 04:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9050647)

The other D&D matriarchal society I think of off the top of my head? Gnolls. Lazy, cruel, vicious psychopaths with claws and fangs, coated in grime and filth, stinking of blood and excrement; savage, depraved, cannibalistic demon-worshipper hyena-barbarians with no redeeming features unless you count "good at fighting".

That help?

Well, that at least is well founded in the reality of hyena biology and sex roles. :) (Incidentally, I thought elves would work perfectly well as the "nice" matriarchal society, and it would make the drow society a more natural fit for a race of demon-perversed elves.)

On the subject of drow alignment, 3e made them NE as a race, which IMO fits their description better. I tend to assume their general attitude is "Everybody hang together, or get hanged alone", tempered by demon-worship, wonky social dynamics and a horrible xenophobia. And not just in the sense of hating strangers, but genuine fear of everyone not like them; Underdark is the dumping ground for races and creatures nobody wants on the surface, but who are too tough to die out. So all their neighbours either outnumber (goblinoids) or outpower (illithids, beholders) them.

On the subject of drow being "spoiler monsters", well sure! The disintegrating equipment is only one thing. They have the darkness ability, to mess with PCs ranged attacks, *Faerie Fire* to ruin invisibility or concealment, levitation to commit unexpected ambushes and/or to run away to harass the characters on another day. Everything in their game mechanics screams "They were designed to be a pain for an average player group to deal with!". :D

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

06-26-2008 04:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9049811)

*The word "svartalv/svartalf" means literally "black elf". Not much is known about them except that they are pitch black, greedy, evil and live underground. **There is some theories that dwarves and svartalvs are the same creature in the sagas** (dwarves in the sagas are generally on the dark grey scale of morality)*

Citation?

Quote:

Also, when on the subject: It's not svartalfar!! I see this a lot of times. Plural form in the Scandinavian languages is -er, not -ar.

Wrong, actually. Svartálfar is correct.

Elemental

06-26-2008 08:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by ogier300 (Post 9050604)

The party travelling through the Underdark stumbles onto a Drow village in the middle of being constructed and find a dozen different groups engaged in a death struggle to put the shingles on the roof and drywall the interior.

I now want to do a campaign that starts with the PC's inheriting a drow construction company. :)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssi (Post 9050647)

The other D&D matriarchal society I think of off the top of my head? Gnolls. Lazy, cruel, vicious psychopaths with claws and fangs, coated in grime and filth, stinking of blood and excrement; savage, depraved, cannibalistic demon-worshipper hyena-barbarians with no redeeming features unless you count "good at fighting".

That help?

As of 3E (maybe earlier), there's also the Eladrins.

Crinos

06-26-2008 08:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Trolls are also matriarchal.

sanguine

06-26-2008 08:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by ogier300 (Post 9050604)

I imagine competitive work teams of Drow, fighting to be the first to complete the project. The reason the architecture is so unusual, weird and the stuff on nightmares is because the buildings are constructed in short bursts by different parties of Drow and their slaves who end up being driven off by other Drow work parties in a constant struggle to be the one to complete the building. Each work party has its own vision of what the building should look like and works hard to make the building conform ... but no one group ever has enough time to complete an entire building on its own.

Now I want the campaign centered on the Drow GAO, and resolving bid disputes between major Drow conglomerates.

"Kellog, Drow, and Root protests the awarding of Lolth's General Services Contract for the underground city of Menzoberanzan to Illithid Telephone and Telegraph, on the grounds that ITT's past performance was not "Superior" as indicated by the Menzoberanzan Procurement Office, and did, in fact, lead to extensive brain-eating on the part of Illithid tech services staff.

The GAO supports this protest."

randomgamer8466

06-26-2008 09:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9034171)

Well, that's from when I was seventeen. :)

The elves are immortal, but they can't breed. Instead they steal infants from our world, and eventually these childrer are changed by the magic of the otherworld into full grown elves. Those who leave before this process is complete are half-elves.

RULE! D&D never did anything cool with the changeling myth. This is better than Nazi elves and Melnibonean elves put together.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Elemental (Post 9051230)

I now want to do a campaign that starts with the PC's inheriting a drow construction company. :)

Go all out: *Flip This Dungeon!* You've got Adventurers coming through, and you're on a tight deadline here... no time to do anything involved; you'll have to make it *look* good. Too long to grow some Yellow Mold; just get some yellow-brownish carpet. Not enough budget for Beholders; maybe you can pick up some Gas Spores at the Bone Depot. Didn't budget for secret doors? Hang some curtains then.

Don't forget to stick some halflings in the oven before the Adventurers show up -- the smell of baking puts people in a good mood, after all.

Or bacon, that is. The smell of bacon. Anyway.

SuperG

06-26-2008 10:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049819)

I noticed that too, actually.

I sometimes devote some thought to a little pet theory I have about male RPG designers. I call it the Male Game Designer And Their Attitudes To Women Threefold Model (MGDATATWTM, or MugDataTwutum, for short).

1.) The first strand of designers are normal in the broad sense; i.e. they just like making fun games. These are the Normals.

2.) The secondary strand worry unduly that there aren't many female role players, because it means they have no chance to meet women. So they misguidedly create races like the Drow in the hope that it'll attract girls to the game. Preferably hot, bisexual girls. These are the Frustrated.

3.) The third strand are called the Masochists. Like the anime artists who draw waif-like chicks with huge broadswords and the creators of Electra, these are designers who for whatever reason get a kick out of seeing women overpower men. It isn't enough for them to create a sensible matriarchal society; the only such society they can envisage is a terrifying, murderous, predatory, dysfunctional one. And yet one gets the sense that they would rather like to live in it.

The Normals wouldn't have created the Drow, but while they are the most numerous strand, they are disunited and find it difficult to counteract the combined efforts of the Frustrated and the Masochists. This is why races like the Drow exist.

Of course, the alternative is Blue Rose. Surely somebody somewhere must have come up with a believable, realistic matriarchal society in a role playing game?

Well, reality is a bit short on actual matriachal societies - which probably is just a sad commentary on humans

and their historical tendency to hand power over to the military.

YojimboC

06-26-2008 11:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9049659)

[]"Drow live in magnificently dark, gloomy cities in the underworld that few humans or demihumans ever see. They construct their buildings entirely out of stone and minerals, carved into weird, fantastic shapes. Those few surface creatures that have seen a dark elf city (and returned to tell the tale) report that it is the stuff of which nightmares are made." Well, okay, leaving aside the cheesy cliché, how is it that a race of murderous devils who "all scramble for power" and for whom "violent conflict is a part of everyday life" were able to cooperate long enough to build these cities? That's not a facetious question; I'd like to hear ideas. My own way of explaining it is that Drow cities were not really built by the Drow - they are ancient ruins of cities built eons ago by a long-forgotten race, and which the Drow are merely occupying. And what if, someday, that race were to return...?"*

I think it comes from having such varied slave stock. Duergar, derro, orcs, mind flayers, skum, aboleth, kuo-toa, svirfneblin, some hook horrors, etc. Just weird geometries and design aesthetics come out of a mix like that.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9045698)

You really could be onto something there. That's a really interesting twist on demihuman races. Of course you'd have to explain halfings too.

Homo florensis. Humans born on islands.

spookshow

06-26-2008 01:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I can understand being sick and tired of drow (and elves in general). They're victims of their own success, overexposed and overused, to the point where I personally feel "enough already, let's see something else." I actually feel the same way about orcs and dwarves.

But I think HATING popular fantasy races like these is ridiculous. It's one of those things about some gamers that bother me -- a weird, deep-seeded and overblown resentment towards anything that becomes too popular. If you always thought drow were stupid, that's fine. But I'm willing to bet when they first read about them, the vast majority of the people now brimming with drow-hate actually thought the race was pretty cool.

Lukas Sjöström

06-26-2008 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9050448)

What is your source? Not that I don't trust you, I'm interested in learning more about them! The book I read just stated that very little is known about them and that they are black skinned. Sort of like Surt.

Nothing but the Wikipedia article on [Norse dwarves](#), I'm afraid. It mentions that the word used for dark skin tone should be "blár", which makes sense, with Africa being "Bláland" and all that.

Kapten

06-26-2008 04:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wields-Rulebook-Heavily (Post 9050825)

Citation?

"Nordiska sagor och hjältar", it's from 1912. Don't remember who wrote it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wields-Rulebook-Heavily (Post 9050825)

Wrong, actually. Svartálfar is correct.

I am a native speaker of Swedish. In Swedish it's Svartalv, svartalver plural. Norwegian and Danish don't have the -ar suffix for plural.

Also, if you are a native speaker, you don't need to use á. We know how to pronounce it from the beginning.

The Last Conformist

06-26-2008 05:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9052637)

I am a native speaker of Swedish. In Swedish it's Svartalv, svartalver plural. Norwegian and Danish don't have the -ar suffix for plural.

Also, if you are a native speaker, you don't need to use á. We know how to pronounce it from the beginning.

I too am a native speaker of Swedish, but "Svartálfar" is not a Swedish word - it's Icelandic. (And native Icelanders do use the accent. It indicates vowel quality, not stress.)

Also, Nynorsk (one of the two official written standards for Norwegian) certainly does have the -ar plural, most

relevantly in *alvar* "elves".

(un)reason

06-26-2008 06:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9051242)
Trolls are also matriarchal.

Must resist internet Analogy. Must Stop ... Talking .. Like . Kirk. :D

medivh

06-26-2008 06:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Incidentally, I've heard Svartelver in use in Denmark.

Lukas Sjöström

06-26-2008 08:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9052712)
I too am a native speaker of Swedish, but "Svartálfar" is not a Swedish word - it's Icelandic. (And native Icelanders do use the accent. It indicates vowel quality, not stress.)

*Also, Nynorsk (one of the two official written standards for Norwegian) certainly does have the -ar plural, most relevantly in *alvar* "elves".*

As does Old Norse, which is the most relevant language here.

noisms

06-26-2008 10:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ettercap

Okay, just to show I'm not such a grumpy old so-and-so after all, I do love a good Ettercap encounter. In many ways I actually think they're the perfect AD&D MM monster, although they aren't my absolute favourite. They have a great, evocative picture; the entry is short and sweet; they are just right for the level 3-6 sweet spot; they have just the right mix of abilities; they're really annoying for PCs to deal with; and they're full of instakill. Fantastic stuff all round.

If you're one of the unfortunates who doesn't know what an Ettercap is, it's an ugly bipedal pot-bellied thing with long arms and poisonous teeth which likes to hang around with giant spiders. Ettercaps are experts on setting traps made of "nets, tripwires and garottes" which they set up with silk glands like spiders; if you get caught in one, you may as well just lie back and wait for death, because within moments the Ettercaps will be on top of you with their save vs. poison or die bites.

That said, there isn't a huge amount of interest about the Ettercap entry, beyond it being really good. I like the line that "Ettercaps do not have a formal language. They express themselves through a combination of high-pitched chittering noises, shrieks, and violent actions," mainly because I don't think it's possible to have too many chittering noises, shrieks and violent actions in a game. I also like how an ounce of Ettercap poison is worth 1000gp; we haven't had usable monster corpses for a while, and it's a welcome return for the mini-genre.

medivh

06-26-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Also

Ettercap = edderkop = danish word for spider.

Foxworthy

06-26-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9053300)

***Ettercap** I also like how an ounce of Ettercap poison is worth 1000gp; we haven't had usable monster corpses for a while, and it's a welcome return for the mini-genre.*

That's a nice chunk of change, but I surely won't be the PC taking the job to go milk the ettercaps poison.

David J Prokopetz

06-27-2008 12:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by medivh (Post 9053468)

Also

Ettercap = edderkop = danish word for spider.

More directly, the term "attercop" turns up in Tolkien with reference to the spiders of Mirkwood.

Kakita Kojiro

06-27-2008 12:42 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9053668)

More directly, the term "attercop" turns up in Tolkien with reference to the spiders of Mirkwood.

I suspect its use in the Hobbit is why it turns up in dictionaries and etymologies -- as [here](#) -- as though it were a word in current use. Which is sort of odd and cool.

kelvingreen

06-27-2008 03:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9053300)

we haven't had usable monster corpses for a while, and it's a welcome return for the mini-genre.

Drowskin hats?

Wields-Rulebook-Heavily

06-27-2008 04:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9052637)

"Nordiska sagor och hjältar", it's from 1912. Don't remember who wrote it.

Hm. I've never heard the theory since, and I can't find the book to test it as a primary source, so hey.

(Snorri's Edda does have a couple of references to the gods descending into "Svartálfaheimur" to meet with dwarves, now that I've checked it, but Snorri isn't a particularly reliable source for how they Norse really envisioned it. Not only is the Edda a poetry manual which doesn't explain any of the mythology, but Snorri himself is infamous for altering or making up stuff to fill in gaps in his knowledge or for outright political purposes in other works.)

Quote:

I am a native speaker of Swedish. In Swedish it's Svartalv, svartalver plural. Norwegian and Danish don't have the -ar

suffix for plural.

Also, if you are a native speaker, you don't need to use á. We know how to pronounce it from the beginning.

Native Icelandic speaker here. the "á" is just how we spell the accent. The word shares the Old Norse conjugation, which most certainly is "-ar".

...but we've wandered off topic. :p

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms

That said, there isn't a huge amount of interest about the Ettercap entry, beyond it being really good. I like the line that "Ettercaps do not have a formal language. They express themselves through a combination of high-pitched chattering noises, shrieks, and violent actions," mainly because I don't think it's possible to have too many chattering noises, shrieks and violent actions in a game. I also like how an ounce of Ettercap poison is worth 1000gp; we haven't had usable monster corpses for a while, and it's a welcome return for the mini-genre.

Reminds me of the rather terrifying time I made my players go through once. It was a serial murder mystery with ettercap poison and ingeniously made garrotes and tripwires, and the PCs were off on a wild goose chase trying to discover which of the nobles (the only ones able to afford the poison) had decided to target several thief's guilds members. Turned out it actually was just an ettercap gone urban (hey, if raccoons can do it...) and the thieves were trying to make some easy gold by killing it and selling the poison. :D

DMH

06-27-2008 06:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

They do make good boogiemans. Depending on how far the fangs go in, victims of ettercaps could be mistaken for vampire attacks.

But it isn't the ettercaps that should be the dangerous component of an encounter with them. They live with spiders and some very small spiders are very toxic.

noisms

06-27-2008 02:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9054596)

They do make good boogiemans. Depending on how far the fangs go in, victims of ettercaps could be mistaken for vampire attacks.

But it isn't the ettercaps that should be the dangerous component of an encounter with them. They live with spiders and some very small spiders are very toxic.

Are there rules for very small toxic spiders somewhere in the MM? I can't find them on a brief flick-through.

Kaiten

06-27-2008 03:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ettercaps are yet another one of the monsters that make me go "Man, those are cool. I should totally use them for an encounter" and then I never do.

noisms

06-27-2008 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Eyewing

This is one of those monsters where the art is so bad that it's difficult to take the thing seriously. Which is a shame because, well - *giant eyes with wings!!!!*

The description is great: "An Eyewing's body is a fat, egg-shaped ball covered with matted black fur. The 5-foot-wide body is supported by a pair of five-foot-long leathery bat wings. Each wing is tipped with a set of three razor-sharp talons. An 8-foot-long rat's tail dangles from the back of the body. The tail ends in a small, sharp spur. It has no feet and has never been known to land.

The body is dominated by the single, bulging, 4-foot-wide eyeball. The eyeball is black with a blood-red pupil. A vile blue fluid continuously leaks from the eye, soiling its fur. Great leathery eyelids squeeze this fluid out and away from the creature. The stench is unbelievable. It gives off an acidic smell that scorches the sensitive tissues in other creatures' noses and mouths." I love it when the writers get carried away like that and start using words like vile, bulging, blood-red and stench.

Eyewings have an unusual attack; they are probably the only MM monster which kills you by crying. (This reminds me of the Cloaker, which kills you by having a good whinge.) It does this by flying past and dropping its poisonous tears onto you - although sadly the resultant save vs. poison isn't to see whether you die or not, but just how much damage you take. It can also do the regular scratch/tail lash type thing.

There are some fun bits and pieces in this entry too:

-*"When left without orders they become sluggish and listless. This should not be taken to mean that they are any less dangerous. This listlessness is their expression of boredom, but nothing relieves eyewing boredom quite like tearing apart innocent creatures."*

-*"Eyewings have been encountered on the moon, where there is no air to breathe and no water to drink."*

-*"The more powerful creatures of the Abyss have no qualms about an eyewing snack should one be nearby."*

I'm so going to use Eyewings as the pets of an evil archmage who is living on the moon. "Fly, my pretties!!!"

Wakboth

06-27-2008 09:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think eyewings are another DL critter; note that they come from Abyss, but are LE. This doesn't really make sense except in DL, where "Abyss" is the generic name for the domains of the evil deities.

noisms

06-27-2008 09:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9056719)

I think eyewings are another DL critter; note that they come from Abyss, but are LE. This doesn't really make sense except in DL, where "Abyss" is the generic name for the domains of the evil deities.

You could be right, although weren't there three moons in Dragonlance? I can't remember.

Steve H

06-27-2008 09:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

They're definitely DL monsters - first appeared in the first 2nd Ed series of DL modules.

sim_james

06-27-2008 09:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Eyewings are indeed from Dragonlance, sort of; they appeared in one of the most pointless DL modules ever printed.

The strengths of DL include its memorable regions and landmarks, the interesting tripartate pantheon, and dramatic events (the Cataclysm, the War of the Lance). So naturally this trilogy of modules takes place almost entirely on the ethereal planes, against a demigoddess villain who was never seen before or since, and has minimal relation to anything else in DL.

Other kooky creatures introduced in this module series include friendly critters who look like Mr Slinky with eyeballs, and giant flowers through which you can peer through time.

DMH

06-27-2008 10:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9055821)

Are there rules for very small toxic spiders somewhere in the MM? I can't find them on a brief flick-through.

Yes and no. Hairy spiders on 326 are small enough and it would be easy to bump up the damage of their toxin (say to 35/death).

kelvingreen

06-27-2008 10:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9056514)

This is one of those monsters where the art is so bad that it's difficult to take the thing seriously. Which is a shame because, well - giant eyes with wings!!!!

I've always quite liked them, myself. Something similar appeared in the first *Phantasy Star* video game, although they were called "Owl Bears" for some unknown reason:

<http://www.rpgclassics.com/shrines/s...es/owlbear.gif>

Stronger versions called "Goldlens" and "Wing Eye" (almost!) turned up later.

DMH

06-27-2008 10:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9056514)

Eyewing

This is one of those monsters where the art is so bad that it's difficult to take the thing seriously. Which is a shame because, well - giant eyes with wings!!!!

Atlas did a interesting version in their Fantasy Bestiary. Eyaks, which are created by spellcasters, come in several colors, each with its own spell like ability. IOWs, they are cheap, disposable minions that can be used in huge flocks.

Lugh

06-28-2008 03:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9056949)

Atlas did a interesting version in their Fantasy Bestiary. Eyaks, which are created by spellcasters, come in several colors, each with its own spell like ability. IOWs, they are cheap, disposable minions that can be used in huge flocks.

Hmm. An intriguing possibility just occurred to me. What if, instead of the toxic blue gunk, and instead of a spell-like ability, each variety of eyewing "cries" a different potion/salve/etc.? They are deliberately created by

alchemist-type mages to endlessly produce vital magical fluids. They'd still need something nifty as an attack form, to keep pesky adventurers from just stealing them and "milking" them. Oh, and each one would have an ioun stone at the center, which helps keep them aloft.

Lukas Sjöström

06-28-2008 04:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9056886)

I've always quite liked them, myself. Something similar appeared in the first Phantasy Star video game, although the were called "Owl Bears" for some unknown reason:

<http://www.rpgclassics.com/shrines/s...es/owlbear.gif>

Stronger versions called "Goldlens" and "Wing Eye" (almost!) turned up later.

They had a bunch of them in Final Fantasy X as well. Those had similarly irrational names, such as "Veteran", though I've long since stopped to expect monster names to make sense in those games. Or monster *anything*, really.

kelvingreen

06-28-2008 05:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9056949)

Atlas did a interesting version in their Fantasy Bestiary. Eyaks, which are created by spellcasters, come in several colors, each with its own spell like ability. IOWs, they are cheap, disposable minions that can be used in huge flocks.

I seem to recall that the bog standard servant spirits in *Shadowrun* 2e were also winged eyeballs. It makes me wonder if all these games are getting these creatures from a common source, but I've never encountered anything similar in any mythology I'm familiar with (which is not a great deal, admittedly).

noisms

06-28-2008 01:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9057670)

Hmm. An intriguing possibility just occurred to me. What if, instead of the toxic blue gunk, and instead of a spell-like ability, each variety of eyewing "cries" a different potion/salve/etc.? They are deliberately created by alchemist-type mages to endlessly produce vital magical fluids. They'd still need something nifty as an attack form, to keep pesky

adventurers from just stealing them and "milking" them. Oh, and each one would have an ioun stone at the center, which helps keep them aloft.

That's a nifty idea. In fact it fits into my archmage-who-lives-on-the-moon-and- breeds-eyewings concept. He could have a whole flock of the things.

Defense could be provided by a handy golem or two.

Crowetron

06-28-2008 10:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well, I know where my next campaign is taking place.

"The king wants you to retrieve an ancient scroll..."

"That that doesn't sound so--"

"From the moon."

"...shit."

A Letter From Prague

06-28-2008 10:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9056827)

So naturally this trilogy of modules takes place almost entirely on the ethereal planes,

Cool?

Quote:

Other kooky creatures introduced in this module series include friendly critters who look like Mr Slinky with eyeball: and giant flowers through which you can peer through time.

Awesome! What's this module called?

Littleredfox

06-29-2008 02:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9057855)

I seem to recall that the bog standard servant spirits in Shadowrun 2e were also winged eyeballs. It makes me wonder if all these games are getting these creatures from a common source, but I've never encountered anything similar in any mythology I'm familiar with (which is not a great deal, admittedly).

ISTR The udjat or Horus's left eye after it was torn out by Set growing wings and flying around. [Thoth helped him grow a replacement]

I can't recall where I saw that version of the myth though.

shirosan

06-29-2008 05:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9057855)

It makes me wonder if all these games are getting these creatures from a common source, but I've never encountered anything similar in any mythology I'm familiar with (which is not a great deal, admittedly).

I always imagined the source was the 60s, like so:

<http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v7...kins/BG105.gif>

That's a...sort of mythology...

E.T.Smith

06-29-2008 03:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9053668)

More directly, the term "attercop" turns up in Tolkien with reference to the spiders of Mirkwood.

It was my understanding (though I only ever read it in a Dungeon adventure, so it may not be official) that ettercaps reproduce by abducting halflings, cocooning them up and painfully transforming them over a period of days into ettercaps. Which I thought was a nice perversion of the monster's Tolkienesque origins.

demiurge1138

06-29-2008 06:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9059881)
Well, I know where my next campaign is taking place.

"The king wants you to retrieve an ancient scroll..."
"That that doesn't sound so--"
"From the moon."
"...shit."

I love it when the moon comes into D&D. One of my players had a character who had a maul of the titans and was all about breaking stuff. His ultimate goal was to shatter the moon, so as to free all of the dragons he was convinced were trapped inside.

Speaking of ettercaps (backtracking a bit...), I love those guys. Way scary in 2nd Edition (they're the reason I never beat Baldur's Gate, bastards). In 3e, with the new poison rules, not nearly as scary. Until I had a party blundering around a swamp end up all trapped in an ettercap web, with the bloated monsters descending to feed.

noisms

06-29-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9062271)
Speaking of ettercaps (backtracking a bit...), I love those guys. Way scary in 2nd Edition (they're the reason I never beat Baldur's Gate, bastards). In 3e, with the new poison rules, not nearly as scary. Until I had a party blundering around a swamp end up all trapped in an ettercap web, with the bloated monsters descending to feed.

That's the same reason I gave up on Baldur's Gate too! I thought I was a complete gaming no-hoper for not getting past those damn ettercaps. Admittedly I didn't try for very long, though.

Saz

06-29-2008 08:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

They are not hard once you where they are going to strike; so usually all it takes is a reload or two then you can place your spellcasters strategically and spam them with spells!

noisms

06-29-2008 08:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Saz (Post 9062397)
They are not hard once you where they are going to strike; so usually all it takes is a reload or two then you can plac

your spellcasters strategically and spam them with spells!

I'm never patient enough with computer games for that. One or two defeats and I start throwing tantrums, and then my wife tells me off. It just ain't worth it. ;)

noisms

06-29-2008 09:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Feyr

Somebody should really have told the designers that it's just silly to give a monster a name which means something but it just spelled differently. I hate that faux medieval, "ye olde elfyn prynses and pyxys" thing. Just spell it Fear, okay?

Anyway, bad name, nice concept - nightmares made real, which feed off fear and do so by launching terrorist attacks at night in major cities. They only come into existence when there are a lot of highly strung people anyway - like in the height of summer, or at a time of famine - which makes them doubly interesting. I just love the idea of a group of PCs stuck in a city during the middle of a drought: Food supplies are running low, disease is spreading, and at night, strange beings haunt the streets... Cool opening for a campaign, actually.

Lots of little Feyrs make one Greater Feyr, which is tougher and also longer-lived. (Ordinary Feyrs are destroyed by daylight, so only usually live for one night.) Where ordinary Feyrs merely cause *fear*, Greater Feyrs can also infect people with sadness, hopelessness, hate, or other negative emotions. And another adventure idea develops - a city overcome by despair and depression, but nobody can figure out why. And yet another one, partly inspired by (I think) the third in the series of Michael Moorcock's Corum books - a city overcome by infighting, which infects even the PCs; can they cooperate together long enough to uncover the reason why?

Ever since reading the Feyr entry I've been unable to get the Fighting Fantasy gamebook title, *An Appointment with F.E.A.R.*, out of my head.

kelvingreen

06-29-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9062482)

Ever since reading the Feyr entry I've been unable to get the Fighting Fantasy gamebook title, An Appointment with F.E.A.R., out of my head.

Then *An Appointment with Feyr* would clearly be the name for your campaign!

sim_james

06-30-2008 12:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by A Letter From Prague (Post 9059902)

Cool?

If it was a generic module, maybe. As a *Dragonlance* module it was irritatingly disconnected from the DL

setting.

Quote:

Originally Posted by A Letter From Prague (Post 9059902)
Awesome! What's this module called?

(Goes to bookshelf)

My mistake - eyewings were introduced in the DLE series (In Search of Dragons, Dragon Magic, and Dragon Keep), whereas the Slinky People come from the DLA series (Dragon Dawn, Dragon Knight, and Dragon's Rest). Both module series start on Krynn but culminate in kooky extraplanar stuff (the Astral Plane, Ethereal Plane, and yes, a trip to the moon).

Both series are by Rick Swan, and have a certain samey-ness to them (which is probably why they've merged in my memory). I get the impression that he wasn't particularly "into" Dragonlance.

The slinky people are called Gk'lok-lok:

Quote:

A gk'lok-lok stands about four feet tall. Its body is a series of thin tubes that glisten and sparkle like polished steel. Its torso is a single tube resembling the stalk of a plant, with two long tubes for legs ending in hooked "feet" and two tubes for arms that curl in seemingly random patterns.

Two thin stalks, which glisten like steel, extend from the "neck" of the torso. Each stalk ends in a bulging eyeball about one-fourth the size of the body. A violet iris surrounds the huge black pupil, and an aura of soft red flames surrounds the entire eyeball.

Although the text says "tubes" a lot, the illustration definitely makes them look like some kind of spring-creature.

The entire race bar one gk'lok-lok spend their entire lives sleeping. If threatened, they usually turn invisible and run away.

One wonders how this 1+1 HD lawful neutral creature was passed over when compiling the Monstrous Manual. ;)

DMH

06-30-2008 01:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The ecology of the feyr, which came out just after the advent of 3.0, added some spiffy stuff like brainwashed slaves.

And be happy with the spelling of feyr, it is much better than the 3.X version (I can't remember it exactly, but it much more gobblygook than feyr).

kelvingreen

06-30-2008 02:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9062866)

And be happy with the spelling of feyr, it is much better than the 3.X version (I can't remember it exactly, but it much more gobblygook than feyr).

"Fihyr", according to Wikipedia, and yes, it's far more silly than the original.

demiurge1138

06-30-2008 04:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

OK, that's it. You've inspired me to sneak some feyrs into my next campaign. It's already going to be set in a city beset by riots, plague and tyranny... they'll fit in just fine.

JasonK

06-30-2008 05:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9061963)

It was my understanding (though I only ever read it in a Dungeon adventure, so it may not be official) that ettercaps reproduce by abducting halflings, cocooning them up and painfully transforming them over a period of days into ettercaps. Which I thought was a nice perversion of the monster's Tolkienesque origins.

Awesome! That, right there, is enough to make me want to figure out how to add halflings back into my game world...

Or maybe let ettercaps reproduce by doing this to anyone...

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9062271)

I love it when the moon comes into D&D. One of my players had a character who had a maul of the titans and was a about breaking stuff. His ultimate goal was to shatter the moon, so as to free all of the dragons he was convinced were trapped inside.

Also brilliant!

~ jason

demiurge1138

06-30-2008 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9063319)
Also brilliant!

~ jason

That player actually did the math, extrapolating the hit points of an object with the dimensions of the moon. He calculated that he could sunder the moon in 111 days.

noisms

06-30-2008 08:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9064957)
That player actually did the math, extrapolating the hit points of an object with the dimensions of the moon. He calculated that he could sunder the moon in 111 days.

I love it when players do stuff like that.

A player in one of my games had this plan to travel to Gehenna and hire an army of Yugoloths with which to take over the world. (He was Lawful Neutral, and wanted to institute a 'benevolent dictatorship'.) He went to great effort to calculate how much gold and rewards would be needed, how to word the contracts, etc. All on graph paper which he kept in a special clear file in all his character notes.

Wakboth

06-30-2008 09:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Did you skip ettin, by the way? Or are those listed under the gigantic "Giant" section... (Don't have my MM around, so I can't check.)

noisms

06-30-2008 10:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9065405)

Did you skip ettin, by the way? Or are those listed under the gigantic "Giant" section... (Don't have my MM around, so I can't check.)

They in the gigantic Giant section. Which we'll be coming to pretty soon. We have a mammoth Fish entry before that, though.

Foxworthy

06-30-2008 10:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065437)

We have a mammoth Fish...

That just gave me an idea for a huge hairy fish with tusk floating under a frozen lake just waiting to attack a party foolish enough to cross. Of course I'd probably be the only one not to groan at that.

noisms

07-01-2008 12:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Fish

The entry just says 'Fish', but it's really about Giant Fish, because the first paragraph is all about how the different varieties listed can swallow adventurers, like the whale with Jonah. If you do get swallowed you take 1hp damage per round until you can cut yourself free. Doesn't seem like enough damage to me - it's *a giant fish's stomach acid*, for goodness' sake.

Barracuda: "The first clue that a Barracuda is in the area might be a sudden pain in the foot, as the marauder swims by and bites off a few tender tones." Love it. I wonder if there are rules somewhere in the AD&D universe for what happens when you lose toes?

Carp, Giant: Not a carping giant, but a Giant Carp. Apparently it has "sharp, curved teeth" - which seems a bit fanciful; I don't remember my uncle's Koi having teeth. Don't they just go 'gulp, gulp' a lot?

Catfish, Giant: The Giant Catfish attacks by whipping its whiskers back and forth to poison you; this also seems a bit fanciful.

Dragonfish: Hooray! Instakill. This is rather like the real-world stonefish in that it lurks in shallow water waiting to be stepped on - the spines stab into your foot and inject you with slow-acting, deadly toxins.

Eel, Electric: This does what it says on the tin, zapping adventurers with bolts of electricity.

Eel, Giant: Again, a toothed fish that I don't think has teeth. (Somebody reading this who knows more about fish will now tell me that I'm an idiot and that they all have them.)

Eel, Marine: This is another electric variety which does more damage than the regular electric kind.

Eel, Weed: Hooray! Another instakill fish. If this one bites you, watch out - you have d4 rounds left to live if you fail the save. Oddly, out of all the kinds of fish, the Weed Eel gets the longest entry - a big, some would say needless, essay on the design of the thing's lair.

Gar, Giant: Another toothed fish, which likes to swallow people.

Lamprey: This is a leech-like fish which attaches itself to you and sucks your blood.

Land Lamprey: As above, but it also *encumbers* its victims, reducing their dexterity.

Manta Ray: This creature is armed with a stinger, but its favourite *modus operandi* is, you've guessed it, swallowing people.

Pike, Giant: This one gets just two short sentences. Surprise bonus. Lives in deep freshwater lakes. The end.

Piranha: There is a 75% chance that piranhas will attack if encountered (more weird exception-based design); I have to say it would be an admirable DM who resisted the urge to ignore dice rolling and just have the creatures attack for certain. Once blood has been drawn the piranhas go berserk and can attack twice per round.

Piranha, Giant: These fish like to leap out of the water to catch water fowl; is this based in reality??

Pungi Ray: Hooray! Yet another instakill fish. Again, this one kills you if you step on it.

Quipper: The wittiest fish alive. Not really; they're piranhas that live in colder waters.

Seahorse, Giant: These can constrict opponents with their tails, and can also be trained as steeds. I'm picturing a big underwater seahorse rodeo, complete with lassos.

Shark: The only one we're *really* interested in, and they only get a tiny entry to the effect that they're attracted to blood. Tell us something we *don't* know.

Shark, Giant: These megalodons can swallow people on an attack roll 4 greater than that required to hit.

Sting Ray: Sting ray....*sting ray*! One of Gerry Anderson's less well known efforts. These cause paralysis for 5-20 turns. I'm interpreting that to mean you end up drowning unless you can be brought to the surface within that time, because too few adventurers drown in games as a general rule. (Think about it - when was the last time it happened in one of your campaigns?)

Phew.

Zartes

07-01-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9062905)

"Fihyr", according to Wikipedia, and yes, it's far more silly than the original.

coming in a bit late here, but I just wanted to say that *finally* the name of those things makes sense. Before, my mind always added a T to the name, which combined with my tendency to over-accentuate Ys meant I kept thinking of them as "fith-years"

kelvingreen

07-01-2008 01:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9065891)

coming in a bit late here, but I just wanted to say that finally the name of those things makes sense. Before, my mind always added a T to the name, which combined with my tendency to over-accentuate Ys meant I kept thinking of them as "fith-years"

The dreaded Fifth Years! We'll have to wait for "S" for "Schoolchild, Obnoxious".

demiurge1138

07-01-2008 02:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065859)

These cause paralysis for 5-20 turns. I'm interpreting that to mean you end up drowning unless you can be brought to the surface within that time, because too few adventurers drown in games as a general rule. (Think about it - when was the last time it happened in one of your campaigns?)

A halfling rogue about four years ago. Was held under water by a kuo-toa were-octopus monk.

Which is why I love this game.

Crowetron

07-01-2008 02:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

That is a ridiculous amount of fish. Did they think the MM was short on aquatic monsters that they needed to toss in 21 different kinds of murderous fish?

Sleeper

07-01-2008 03:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065859)

Eel, Giant: Again, a toothed fish that I don't think has teeth. (Somebody reading this who knows more about fish will now tell me that I'm an idiot and that they all have them.)

I know absolutely nothing about fish, but a little searching turned up [this interesting article](#) about the second pharyngeal set of jaws in moray eels that can jump out to drag prey back down the esophagus. Apparently, a living inspiration for *Alien*.

From Mark Westneat, curator of zoology at the Field Museum in Chicago: "Having a jaw in your throat that has long, recurved, canine teeth — and can actually shoot out of your throat into your mouth, grab a fish or something, and pull it down the throat — is highly unusual."

A book of monsters inspired solely by the weird corners of the natural world would be neat.

JRM

07-01-2008 03:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065859)

Fish

Eel, Giant: Again, a toothed fish that I don't think has teeth. (Somebody reading this who knows more about fish will now tell me that I'm an idiot and that they all have them.)

Lots of species of eels have teeth, including some large predatory animals like moray eels and conger eels, but not all of them. Moray eels not only have teeth, they have four rows of teeth due to having an extra pair of jaws (the Pharyngeal jaws) that help them swallow prey - you can see a handy diagram on Wikipedia [here](#).

EDIT: Oh, I see Sleeper beat me to it while I was composing this post. Oh well, it's the thought that counts. There are other animals with extra rows of teeth to help swallowing prey, like pythons and the extinct Mosasaurs, but I believe Morays are pretty unique in being able to project their interior jaws.

Quote:

*Manta Ray: This creature is armed with a stinger, but its favourite *modus operandi* is, you've guessed it, swallowing people.*

Alas, this is complete bunkum. Manta Rays are filter feeders whose throats are too narrow for them to swallow people even if they wanted to. If I remember correctly they don't have tail-stings either.

EDIT: I just checked and yup, mantas don't have stings, although plenty of other kinds of ray do. Manta rays are still very large and powerful fish, so they should be able to give a party of adventurers a mighty buffeting if they were so inclined.

Quote:

Sting Ray: Sting ray.....sting ray! One of Gerry Anderson's less well known efforts. These cause paralysis for 5-20 turns. I'm interpreting that to mean you end up drowning unless you can be brought to the surface within that time

because too few adventurers drown in games as a general rule. (Think about it - when was the last time it happened in one of your campaigns?)

Hmm... that would be last year in a Star Wars campaign I was running. Wouldn't have happened if the player-characters didn't leave one of their number chained unconscious to a chair bolted to the bridge-deck of the sinking ship they'd escaped from. I *told* the players they were forgetting something.

DMH

07-01-2008 05:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

As an angler that targets just carp, their listed attack is just silly when the real one is so much better. With shelled prey- inhale, mash with internal teeth, spit out shell and swallow meat. They are very good at this and eat clams and mussels. With small prey in mud- gulp mud, spit it out in suspension, pick prey out of mud cloud. A good 2 part attack to make the eater think the fish gave up.

JRM

07-01-2008 07:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9066905)

*As an angler that targets just carp, their listed attack is just silly when the real one is so much better. **With shelled prey- inhale, mash with internal teeth, spit out shell and swallow meat. They are very good at this and eat clams and mussels.** With small prey in mud- gulp mud, spit it out in suspension, pick prey out of mud cloud. A good 2 part attack to make the eater think the fish gave up.*

The first of those sounds just right for dealing with those pesky plate-armoured fighters.

Steve H

07-01-2008 07:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065859)

Fish

Sting Ray: Sting ray....sting ray! One of Gerry Anderson's less well known efforts. These cause paralysis for 5-20 turns I'm interpreting that to mean you end up drowning unless you can be brought to the surface within that time, because too few adventurers drown in games as a general rule. (Think about it - when was the last time it happened in one of your campaigns?)

Oddly enough, the last time someone drowned in a game I ran was while running the previously mentioned DL

modules which introduced Eyewings. The party's Paladin got caught in a cone-effect Paralysis from the Wizard and fell off their boat, with hilarious consequences (this is about 20 years ago now, but from memory we had several fumbled swim skill rolls from people trying to save him, as well as multiple failed healing rolls on attempt to give the kiss off life once he was out of the water)

The Last Conformist

07-01-2008 09:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9065859)

*If you do get swallowed you take 1hp damage per round until you can cut yourself free. Doesn't seem like enough damage to me - it's **a giant fish's stomach acid**, for goodness' sake.*

That's an interesting question I suppose - would the acid kill you before you drown? I'm fairly certain that piscine stomach juice is not human-breathable.

noisms

07-01-2008 10:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9066130)

That is a ridiculous amount of fish. Did they think the MM was short on aquatic monsters that they needed to toss in 21 different kinda of murderous fish?

And most of them are just variations on a theme - do we really need so many kinds of eels, carp and piranhas?

Then again, the tendency towards unnecessary creativeness is one of the things I really love about the 2nd edition MM. I know for a fact that I'll never use all of the Fish. But I can't help but enjoy the fact that they are there.

....Now all I can think about is a campaign in which the PCs encounter every kind of Fish.

g026r

07-01-2008 11:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9067765)

....Now all I can think about is a campaign in which the PCs encounter every kind of Fish.

The Giant's Banquet: The local ruler of a kingdom is planning on holding a banquet in honour of the ruler of a nearby giant kingdom with whom he hopes to finalize a peace treaty. In order to satisfy this visiting ruler's prodigious appetites, he hires the PCs to search out and bring back numerous creatures that can be used for food (scrambled roc eggs, anyone?) -- including, of course, several of the giant fish.

So it's not every kind, but it's the best you get on such short notice. :p

Sleeper

07-01-2008 04:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9067476)
I'm fairly certain that piscine stomach juice is not human-breathable.

Warning: If you have an aversion to NC-17 themes, skip the spoiler text.

Not until Beautiful Flower Who Fucks with Nature found an unexploited niche in the cross-species sexual tourism industry. All those handsome mermen and their fair maids, all those big strong dragon turtles, all those unmolested dolphins. Hiding away their sons and daughters in their grottos, underneath the sea.

But how to exploit this? Autoasphyxiation may be erotic, but drowning generally isn't. Beautiful Fucking Flower had a brainstorm, took an afanc, and turned it into a shuttle bus. The first trick was to cause the biliary glands to extrude a base to counteract the acid in the bile. No longer did a client's endurance have to be measured in hit points. The next trick was to hyper-oxygenate the fluid. All of a sudden, airy water. Not just harmless but breathable (if a bit strange) by terrestrial types. Equally important, it was also harmless and breathable (if a bit thin) by all those submarine races.

The bubbles even tickled, which was a definite plus. Even better however, the frothing quasi-liquid could suspend both inhaled and ingested compounds. Mild sophorics and euphorics, male enhancement drugs, and even the occasional hallucinogen were part of the standard mix.

Of course, the poor thing could no longer digest food, so Beautiful Flower who Fucks with Nature welded a ring of sustenance onto one of the digit analogs in its right front fin.

All the draconic circles were soon a-twitter with the idea of an entire untouched realm of potential new sexual conquests, so they lined up to be engulfed by the maw of the giant fish.

Except for the black dragons, of course. Water breathing and dank and drippy lairs already went hand in hand. They just sniffed and tried to look all dark and cool as they said things like "once you had one locathah, you've had 'em all", and "slime's not all it's cracked up to be". Didn't quite work. They're still the stinky inbred country cousins of the hexapedal pseudo-lizard world. The rest of the dragons were just glad they had an excuse not to invite their hick relatives on their pleasure cruises.

So, children, the mighty wizard Beautiful Flower Who Fucks with Nature isn't the reason why half-dragons took over the Third Age (edition?) of the world. But that flotilla of modified afancs hosting an endless parade of carnal romps by dragons in every imaginable shapechanged form is definitely the reason why they took over every last damn soggy little niche.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9067765)

And most of them are just variations on a theme - do we really need so many kinds of eels, carp and piranhas?

Then again, the tendency towards unnecessary creativeness is one of the things I really love about the 2nd edition MM. I know for a fact that I'll never use all of the Fish. But I can't help but enjoy the fact that they are there.

Most of those showed up in the 1E MM, with a couple from the Fiend Folio and the MM2. And a few are missing, like the afanc, verme, and swordfish. River travel is nasty when the fish are bigger than your boat.

noisms

07-01-2008 05:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9068681)

**snip*

You strange, sick person, you.

;)

noisms

07-01-2008 09:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Frog

Giant Frogs

Interesting, in a very low-grade way, that we get two entries in a row containing monsters which swallow people. Interesting also that the Frog entry seems to treat it in a more 'realistic' way - if you get swallowed by one you will die of asphyxiation within 3 rounds, no matter what. Unfortunately that only works with creatures under 3' tall - so watch out Gnomes and Halflings. With Human-sized beings the Frog just hooks them in with its tongue and repeatedly bites them until they are dead.

There isn't really much else to say about Giant Frogs. I like the idea of adventurers being caught, insect-like, by the amphibians' tongue, and reeled in towards certain death. And the rules deal with the situation in an elegant and simple way.

As with the Crayfish, I have an idea to write an encounter with a set of villagers who worship the Giant Frogs of the local marshland, and try to capture travelers to offer up as sacrifices to the Great Croakers.

Killer Frogs

Killer Frogs! You can't get more pulpy than that. These have teeth and claws with which to attack, and they love the taste of human flesh.

Poisonous Frogs

The Poisonous Frog secretes a contact poison through its skin. Disappointingly, the poison is very weak, and there is "no market for it". Seems like the designers missed a trick there - what could be better than giant poison arrow frogs, with toxins which adventurers could spread on their blades?

Lugh

07-01-2008 10:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9069304)
Poisonous Frogs

The Poisonous Frog secretes a contact poison through its skin. Disappointingly, the poison is very weak, and there is "no market for it". Seems like the designers missed a trick there - what could be better than giant poison arrow frogs, with toxins which adventurers could spread on their blades?

Tsk, tsk indeed. I mean, at the very least, they could have inserted the rumour that there is a species of poisonous frog that produces euphoric hallucinations in those who lick it.

Then you would have doughty adventurers capturing frogs, prepping *neutralize poison* in case it was the wrong species, and licking the frogs. Comedy gold!

demiurge1138

07-02-2008 01:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

My favorite encounter from a rather abortive module I ran a while back involved a moat full of giant frogs. That the halfling monk promptly fell in.

He was always armed, so he was pretty good at punching his way out of a bloated frog belly. But as soon as he escaped one, another two or three tongues would hit him, and the frogs would tug-of-war, the winner snapping him up and swallowing.

That character made it to shore at -9 hit points. At least four frogs exploded from the inside floated in his wake.

demiurge1138

07-02-2008 01:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Nothing to see here. Move along...

durecellrabbit

07-02-2008 05:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I can't believe I missed this awesome thread until now. This was the book which got me into RPGs.

JRM

07-02-2008 05:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

There are a bunch of older D&D monsters that live in water and can swallow PCs up to the size of a halfling. It can suck to be small in D&D, you can't swim across a river without worrying about being gulped down by a giant gar.

As for the frog-worshipping swamp village, it reminds me of the Greyhawk cult of [Wastri the Hopping Prophet](#).

If you get bored of the Monstrous Manual's frogs you could try the [Giant Vampire Frog](#) from Dragon #50. That's a cat sized gliding frog with blood-sucking fangs that ambushes adventurers from trees.

noisms

07-02-2008 01:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9070853)

If you get bored of the Monstrous Manual's frogs you could try the Giant Vampire Frog from Dragon #50. That's a cat sized gliding frog with blood-sucking fangs that ambushes adventurers from trees.

That sounds a bit like the Yaramayahoo from Australian Aboriginal mythology. A giant tree frog which drops out of trees and swallows children.

noisms

07-02-2008 01:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by durecellrabbit (Post 9070838)

I can't believe I missed this awesome thread until now. This was the book which got me into RPGs.

I blame the *Fighting Fantasy* books for my introduction to RPGs, but the 2nd edition Monstrous Manual is probably the main reason I stuck with them.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Fungus

Hmm. Fish, Frogs and Fungus all in a row; this is a tough slog, even though each entry is interesting and usable in its own way. I think as a youth I kept skipping this section and moving on to the more interesting Giants, Gnolls and Goblins just around the corner. (G is the longest section of the MM and probably the best.)

Straight away we get an error: "Fungi are simple plants..." I get to show off my very limited biological knowledge by saying that no, Fungi most certainly aren't plants. They're their own Kingdom, though whether they have a King or not I'm unsure.

What's unusual about this entry is that there is quite a detailed section explaining what ordinary Fungi are and what they can be used for - this despite the obvious fact that this is a Monstrous Manual and ordinary Fungi are not monsters. (And indeed don't do anything except, well, grow.) There is some mention of the fact that alchemists and the like can use them, but disappointingly no information on the deadly varieties.

Other types include:

Violet Fungus - These have tentacle-like structures which lash out at living things, causing *necrosis* on a failed save.

Shriekers - These have a good relationship with Violet Fungus: the Shriekers make a big racket if anybody approaches, which attracts wandering monsters - and presumably the Violet Fungus then gorge themselves on the resultant bodies.

Phycomid - These spit spores which will quickly take over and kill a person if they fail a saving through. The resultant corpse then becomes another Phycomid. I'd love to include a whole city of Phycomids in a D&D campaign - like the fantasy equivalent of Dawn of the Dead.

Ascomoid - Another instakiller, this rolls over you, spitting spores, which kill you within 1d4 rounds through "infection of [your] internal organs".

Gas Spore - This is "90% likely to be mistaken for a Beholder" (did someone mention exception-based design?), and floats around waiting to be struck - whereupon it will explode, doing hideous amounts of damage and, yes, infecting whoever it strikes. The victims then have 24 hours to live, whereupon they produce a new batch of Gas Spores themselves.

Fungus are a deadly bunch. Plenty of interesting ways for a crafty DM to destroy adventuring parties in the entry. (I mean, of course, plenty of interesting ways to "challenge" his players.)

JRM

07-02-2008 11:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9072220)

That sounds a bit like the Yaramayahoo from Australian Aboriginal mythology. A giant tree frog which drops out of trees and swallows children.

Haven't heard of Yaramayahoo before. They sound more like regular giant frogs that lives in trees (a Giant Tree Frog?) than the Giant Vampire Frog, since the latter doesn't swoop down to swallow victims entire, but drinks their blood.

Anyhows, there are a bunch of Australian Aboriginal monsters statted up in the Call of Cthulhu book *Terror Australis*. I've got a copy of the original book lying around here somewhere, but it's been so long since I read it I can't remember much of the details. The monsters were mostly supernatural beings, and included things like reed-thin humanoids that used deadly magical weapons and if you had carnal relations with one you'd transform into one of their kind, and chameleons so huge they could swallow men like insects.

JRM

07-02-2008 11:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9073594)

Fungus

Straight away we get an error: "Fungi are simple plants..." I get to show off my very limited biological knowledge by saying that no, Fungi most certainly aren't plants. They're their own Kingdom, though whether they have a King or not I'm unsure.

Of course they have monarchs, or are you forgetting the Myconid King? I have had PCs run into one of them ruling an underdark Myconid community a couple of times, since I think they are pretty fun guys.

Malignant Marionette

07-03-2008 12:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9073705)

I think they are pretty fun guys.

Urgh. The puns are worse than the instakill monsters. :p

JRM

07-03-2008 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9073958)

Urgh. The puns are worse than the instakill monsters. :p

It's an tired old pun compared to 'In the lands of mortar, where the sandlings lie', but I just couldn't resist.

Speaking of instakill monsters, 60% of the fungi have 'save or die' spores, although not all are instakill, and that doesn't include yellow mold, which is presumably taxanomically a fungus, albeit not of the 'giant murder-mushroom' variety.

There are real life species of fungi which snares tiny animals in loops of mycella and then digests them. I'm sure there are giant adventurer-eating variety lying around in various D&D homebrew campaigns - there were in mine. There's also a Fighting Fantasy solo-adventure in a Warlock magazine that features such a giant noose fungus.

noisms

07-03-2008 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

There is something genuinely frightening about being trapped and slowly digested by a giant fungus. No matter how much you struggle you can never escape...

Mark Krawec

07-03-2008 01:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

If you saw the Planet Earth miniseries a while back, you may remember the cordyceps fungus that [infects ants' brains, drives them insane, then erupts out of their heads to spread spores around the colony](#). Surely there has to be an adventurer-borne variety lurking in a dungeon somewhere!

DMH

07-03-2008 01:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The one fungus they should have included is the zygom. It is like the *Cordyceps* in that it controls its host. It also provides great jokes when the old host and new host are glued together for a day or two.

JRM

07-03-2008 04:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mark Krawec (Post 9074105)

If you saw the Planet Earth miniseries a while back, you may remember the cordyceps fungus that infects ants' brains, drives them insane, then erupts out of their heads to spread spores around the colony. Surely there has to be an adventurer-borne variety lurking in a dungeon somewhere!

There are a number of functionally/conceptually similar monsters in D&D - Sons of Kyuss are an undead

equivalent, Yellow Musk Creepers are plants whose pollen turns humanoids into half-alive slaves, who eventually go mad and wander away to die, spouting another Yellow Musk Creeper where they fell. Elder Myconids can produce spores that can turn a recently deceased corpse into a 'fungal zombie' used to guard myconid settlements.

In the real world there are lots of parasites that alter their hosts behaviour - for example, there's one (Toxoplasmosis) that cause mice to become attracted to the smell of cats, so the cat becomes infected.

Kakita Kojiro

07-03-2008 10:01 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9073594)

Gas Spore - This is "90% likely to be mistaken for a Beholder" (did someone mention exception-based design?), and floats around waiting to be struck - whereupon it will explode, doing hideous amounts of damage and, yes, infecting whoever it strikes. The victims then have 24 hours to live, whereupon they produce a new batch of Gas Spores themselves.

I know it is (usually) a bad idea to mix faux evolution with fantasy settings, but I've always wanted someone to make use of the idea that Beholders have apparently been around long enough for gas spores to have "evolved" to look *just like them* as camouflage. I mean, that probably took a really, really long time, right? So beholders are *that* old. Kind of creepy, eh?

Mind you, it's a *very* weird reproductive mechanism those gas spores apparently have. All kinds of opportunities for a backstory by someone clever, I'd think.

noisms

07-03-2008 01:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9075990)

I know it is (usually) a bad idea to mix faux evolution with fantasy settings, but I've always wanted someone to make use of the idea that Beholders have apparently been around long enough for gas spores to have "evolved" to look just like them as camouflage. I mean, that probably took a really, really long time, right? So beholders are that old. Kind of creepy, eh?

What if, for some sinister purpose, *Beholders were creating Gas Spores?*

g026r

07-03-2008 01:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9076558)

What if, for some sinister purpose, Beholders were creating Gas Spores?

It's all a mechanism so that a beholder can get a good night's rest without adventurers taking cheap shots in its sleep.

I mean, you'd certainly think twice about sneaking up and whacking that sleeping beholder from behind if you weren't certain it wasn't really a gas spore, wouldn't you? :p

Sleeper

07-03-2008 02:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9076558)

What if, for some sinister purpose, Beholders were creating Gas Spores?

Well, sinister is the heraldic term for left. The title of *LeGuin's Left Hand of Darkness* comes from Torner's Lay, which makes a Taoist pairing of light and dark. If beholders are creatures of the dark, and often specifically the Underdark, then gas spores must be creatures of the Overlight... the Sun? The prayer says "lying / together like lovers in a kemmer"

I got it. A beholder is a completely aerial species liverwort. Male and female gas spores collide, flesh out, and become beholders. Beholders also constantly release tiny spores, which catch the warm air currents and rise until they reach the sunlight, where they rapidly grow into gas spores using the magic of photosynthesis.

see

07-03-2008 09:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9076558)

What if, for some sinister purpose, Beholders were creating Gas Spores?

Me, I'm imagining a beholder in a cavern of gas spores, using *telekinesis* to move the gas spores around, then using *cause serious wounds* to make them explode if the PCs don't mistake them for the beholder and strike first.

noisms

07-03-2008 09:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9077401)

Me, I'm imagining a beholder in a cavern of gas spores, using telekinesis to move the gas spores around, then using cause serious wounds to make them explode if the PCs don't mistake them for the beholder and strike first.

Now there's an evil DM's mind at work. Genius.

Kakita Kojiro

07-04-2008 10:38 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9076656)

I got it. A beholder is a completely aerial species liverwort. Male and female gas spores collide, flesh out, and become beholders. Beholders also constantly release tiny spores, which catch the warm air currents and rise until they reach the sunlight, where they rapidly grow into gas spores using the magic of photosynthesis.

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9077401)

Me, I'm imagining a beholder in a cavern of gas spores, using telekinesis to move the gas spores around, then using cause serious wounds to make them explode if the PCs don't mistake them for the beholder and strike first.

GM: "Oh, this beholder isn't *attacking* you all. He's trying to *mate* with you all."

PCs: :eek:

The Ent

07-04-2008 10:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9074051)

There is something genuinely frightening about being trapped and slowly digested by a giant fungus. No matter how much you struggle you can never escape...

Yeah.

It made for one of the better late-series X-Files eps for one thing. Well imo.

noisms

07-04-2008 12:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Galeb Duhr

Let's say straight away that I love Galeb Duhr. Mysterious mountain spirits who look like boulders, act as shepherds to rocks, and collect gems: what's not to like? Well, except for the picture, which makes them look rather more like egg-men than mighty denizens of the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Galeb Duhr are what you would expect a boulder-spirit to be: big, tough, and slow. They seem to treat rocks as their pets or charges - they can animate boulders to attack, and show great concern for their safety. Woe betide anybody who messes about with a Galeb Duhr's pet rocks.

The most obvious point of interest with Galeb Duhr is that they collect gems, and have an intimate knowledge of where seams of minerals are in their territory. An invitation to adventurers if ever there was one: how to persuade the surly rock spirits of the great mountain to show the way to the motherlode of platinum of legend?

My favourite aspect of the monster is their music, though: "Sitting together in groups, the galeb duhr harmonize their gravelly voices into eldritch tunes; some sages speculate that these melodies can cause or prevent earthquakes. Others argue that the low rumbling produced by these creatures is a form of warning to others in the group, but there is no conclusive evidence either way."

It's one of those little elements of mystery that a creative DM can pick up and run with. What's the music for: is it to cause or prevent earthquakes, a warning, or something else entirely?

wingedcoyote

07-04-2008 12:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always loved the singing Galeb Duhr. As far as I was concerned, the purpose of the music was "to get the players good and creeped out just before the rocks start attacking them".

Ragnarok_Engine

07-04-2008 02:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9080536)

I always loved the singing Galeb Duhr. As far as I was concerned, the purpose of the music was "to get the players good and creeped out just before the rocks start attacking them".

With a side order of, "*Labyrinth* was awesome, wasn't it?"

sim_james

07-04-2008 03:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9080485)

My favourite aspect of the monster is their music, though: "Sitting together in groups, the galeb duhr harmonize their gravelly voices into eldritch tunes

A rock concert, as it were.

noisms

07-04-2008 03:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9080878)

A rock concert, as it were.

And I *bet* that's how the whole thing started.

I wonder which of the MM designers was the 'office joker'?

(un)reason

07-04-2008 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9080918)

And I bet that's how the whole thing started.

I wonder which of the MM designers was the 'office joker'?

I'm betting on the one who did the art for the invisible stalker. I mean, look at what that thing's doing. No-one really stalks like that. ;) Totally unrealistic.

JRM

07-04-2008 08:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9081286)

I'm betting on the one who did the art for the invisible stalker. I mean, look at what that thing's doing. No-one really stalks like that. ;) Totally unrealistic.

Hmm, is that the picture that makes one think [Elmer Fudd voice on] "Be vewy vewy quite, I'm hunting adwentuwers"[Elmer Fudd voice off].

Deadmanwalking

07-04-2008 09:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9081547)

Hmm, is that the picture that makes one think [Elmer Fudd voice on] "Be vewy vewy quite, I'm hunting adwentuwers"[Elmer Fudd voice off].

No. No, it's not. It's white space, because it's invisible and all. :)

noisms

07-04-2008 10:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 9081604)

No. No, it's not. It's white space, because it's invisible and all. :)

And much hilarity was had by all.

JRM

07-05-2008 04:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Deadmanwalking (Post 9081604)

No. No, it's not. It's white space, because it's invisible and all. :)

Oh, you obviously forgot to cast *See Invisible* before looking at the illustration. ;)

noisms

07-05-2008 11:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

You know, you should be saving up all these cracks for the actual Invisible Stalker entry.

JRM

07-05-2008 09:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9083603)

You know, you should be saving up all these cracks for the actual Invisible Stalker entry.

Nah, we might have forgotten them by then. Strike while the iron's hot, that's what I say.

Alternatively, our readers may have forgotten these cracks by the time the actual Invisible Stalker entry comes round, then we can reuse them all!

noisms

07-05-2008 09:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The interesting entries really come thick and fast in 'G'. In fact I don't think there's a single low-grade one in there. Today's entry, for me, is the closest to it:

Gargantua

Well, 'low-grade' is kind of harsh. My main problem, oddly, is with the art - which is extremely rare for a DiTerlizzi piece. It just really doesn't summon up what I think a Gargantuan beast should be - which is to say, a hulking, brutish monstrosity laying waste to entire kingdoms. Instead, we get something that looks a bit like a lanky Stegosaurus standing next to a gazebo, with an unconcerned looking bloke waiting idly by. It just doesn't say "mighty beast from beyond the dawn of time" to me. If anything it looks like somebody's grossly oversized pet.

Anyway, off with the entry.

Reptilian Gargantuan

This is the biggest (100-200' tall) and most dangerous, offering a whopping 43,000 XP to its killers. It emits deafening roars "that sound like the trumpeting of a bull elephant amplified a thousandfold" (Godzilla, anyone?) and generally acts like a great big mindless vandal - rumbling around breaking stuff a la the old computer game *Rampage*. The only real motivation other than wanton destruction is revenge - if you piss it off, you'll know about it, because it will pursue you even across the oceans to get its vengeance. Cool concept - my next set of mid-high level characters are *so* going to unwittingly annoy a Reptilian Gargantuan and find themselves chased to the end of the earth...

A few other bits of interest:

- The entry goes on quite a bit about Kara-Tur... Grr... Mutter... Grumble...

- Flowers that grow in a Reptilian Gargantuan's footprint can be used to make a potion of growth - now there's an adventure 'seed' (see, I can make cracks too) if ever there was one.
- When a Reptilian Gargantuan is born a lightning storm will develop, and dead things struck by the lightning will be immediately *resurrected*. Now that's an elaborate way to save on resurrection fees at the local temple. "First, we have to try to get that Reptilian Gargantuan to shag that other one, and then we have to wait through its pregnancy..."

Humanoid Gargantua

This is what it sounds like - an 80-100' tall humanoid which...likes breaking stuff. Only if you annoy it though; unlike the Reptilian Gargantua it doesn't go on mindless rampages. Which is a bit boring.

Insectoid Gargantua

This is an immense moth, which....likes breaking stuff. (Hang on...Reptilian Gargantua = Godzilla. Insectoid Gargantua =Mothra?) It has sticky silk with which to immobilize victims, and can conjure up a hurricane by beating its wings. Watch out Mulberry trees - you're its favourite food.

Insectoid Gargantuas' silk can be made into magical robes. And if you don't know how to make that into a good adventure, there's no helping you.

kelvingreen

07-05-2008 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9084407)

Well, 'low-grade' is kind of harsh. My main problem, oddly, is with the art - which is extremely rare for a DiTerlizzi piece. It just really doesn't summon up what I think a Gargantuan beast should be

With good reason. The entry skirts close enough to a lawsuit as is, without the picture making it extremely obvious. I'd imagine the brief was "make it look like Godzilla without making it look like Godzilla", so DiTerlizzi did okay, I'd say.

The only disappointment for me is that the "humanoid" Gargantua isn't a giant ape. I know that they were going for the whole kaiju thing (although I can't think of many humanoid kaiju who aren't scifi types), but if King Kong fits anywhere in the *MM*, it's here.

noisms

07-06-2008 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9084443)

With good reason. The entry skirts close enough to a lawsuit as is, without the picture making it extremely obvious. I'd imagine the brief was "make it look like Godzilla without making it look like Godzilla", so DiTerlizzi did okay, I'd say.

The only disappointment for me is that the "humanoid" Gargantua isn't a giant ape. I know that they were going for the whole kaiju thing (although I can't think of many humanoid kaiju who aren't scifi types), but if King Kong fits anywhere in the MM, it's here.

Well, let's stat one up! Best King Kong variant wins a banana.

Simian Gargantua

Climate/Terrain: Tropical and subtropical islands

Frequency: Very rare

Organization: Solitary or Mated Pair

Activity Cycle: Diurnal

Diet: Omnivore

Intelligence: Low (5-7)

Treasure: Nil

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

No. Appearing: 1, or 1-2

Armour Class: 2

Movement: 21

Hit Dice: 30

THACO: 5

No. Attacks: 3

Damage/Attack: 4-40/4-40/2-20

Special Attacks: Throw, Chomp (See below)

Special Defenses: Regeneration

Magic Resistance: Nil

Size: G (60-80' tall)

Morale: Elite (14)

Simian Gargantua inhabit humid, mosquito infested islands in the deepest tropics. Brutish, aggressive, and violent, they fly into a berserk rage at the slightest provocation. Their only real weakness is for human beings of the opposite sex, who sometimes become the focus for their primal desires.

When it makes a successful attack with either of its fists, a Simian Gargantuan can elect to try to grab its opponent so long as said opponent is ogre-sized or smaller; it immediately makes another 'to-hit' roll. If this second roll is successful, the target has been grabbed. Neither the initial or secondary attack do damage, but the Simian Gargantuan can on its next turn make either a Throw or Chomp attack. The Chomp attack causes 6-60 hit points of damage and hits automatically. The Throw attack allows the Gargantuan to hurl its opponent 3d6x10 yards in a random direction, causing damage equal to half the distance thrown.

Most Simian Gargantua resemble giant gorillas, but subspecies which look like orang-utans, chimpanzees and gibbons are rumoured to exist.

kelvingreen

07-06-2008 01:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9084651)

Their only real weakness is for human beings of the opposite sex, who sometimes become the focus for their primal desires.

There's not enough exception-based design in there:

A Simian Gargantua will attack on sight, although there is an 80% chance that it will cease its attack if presented with a female humanoid with a Charisma of 18 or better.

Fixed. ;)

Belchion

07-06-2008 02:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9084911)

A Simian Gargantua will attack on sight, although there is an 80% chance that it will cease its attack if presented with a female humanoid with a Charisma of 18 or better.

Still not perfect. It should be 40 % chance with Charisma 10 and additional 5 % per additional Charisma point, up to 80 % at Charisma 18.

JRM

07-06-2008 03:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9084651)

Well, let's stat one up! Best King Kong variant wins a banana.

D&D has had an official simulacrum of King K*cough*g since Gygas's 1st edition module Isle of the Ape came out which starred Oonga, the largest living example of the Gargantuan Carnivorous Ape. (Incidentally Isle of the Ape came out in 1985, the same year the original Oriental Adventures first introduced Gargantuas to D&D.)

Anyhow, I like the concept of Gargantuas but would make them much tougher. To my mind, they should be nigh-indestructable engines of destruction that only the most potent of parties would be able to bring down. The main problem is spellcasters could keep throwing Save or Die or *Polymorph Other* spell at a Gargantua until it fails a saving throw and keels over or turn into a goldfish. They need to have epic-level magic resistance and/or immunity to most of the 'easy kill' spells to make them something that really puts the fear of God(zilla) into players.

Plus, they need a ranged attack or very high movement so the party can't wittle them down from a safe distance with arrows, *Fireballs* and the like.

If I recall correctly, Mr Gygas gave Oonga Magic Resistance, Immunity to Mind-Affecting and Polymorph/Death spells and a storm giant grade boulder throwing ability. That's the sort of thing I'm talking about, a Gargantua should be almost as fearsome an opponent as The Tarrasque.

wingedcoyote

07-06-2008 03:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9085170)

Anyhow, I like the concept of Gargantuas but would make them much tougher. To my mind, they should be nigh-indestructable engines of destruction that only the most potent of parties would be able to bring down. The main problem is spellcasters could keep throwing Save or Die or Polymorph Other spell at a Gargantua until it fails a saving throw and keels over or turn into a goldfish. They need to have epic-level magic resistance and/or immunity to most of the 'easy kill' spells to make them something that really puts the fear of God(zilla) into players.

Plus, they need a ranged attack or very high movement so the party can't wittle them down from a safe distance with arrows, Fireballs and the like.

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I think what you're describing is the Tarrasque. :)

Malignant Marionette

07-06-2008 04:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I'm disappointed in this thread.

No bad gazebo jokes and obvious comic references yet?

see

07-06-2008 04:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9085255)

I'm disappointed in this thread.

No bad gazebo jokes and obvious comic references yet?

Well, we haven't reached Gazebo yet; that would come alphabetically after Gargoyle, and we just got to Gargantua.

Comic references? Well, I guess Garfield would come between Galeb Duhr and Gargantua . . .

demiurge1138

07-06-2008 04:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The "humanoid gargantua" was actually called Gargantua. At least, in the title. In the Sixties, Toho made two movies featuring a giant irradiated humanoid that formed from the heart of Frankenstein's Monster, caught in Hiroshima. The movies were [Frankenstein Conquers the World](#) and [War of the Gargantuas](#).

It should be pointed out that the Monster of the first movie only rampages when threatened, like the D&D Humanoid Gargantua, but War of the Gargantuas features another, man-eating Gargantua as well.

Neurotrash

07-06-2008 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I think the humanoid Gargantua are supposed to be these things

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gargantuas>

I saw this on a Saturday afternoon when I was like, six, under the title of "War of the Gargantuas". I think it was the first time I ever came into contact with the word "gargantua" and I've always assumed it was the inspiration for the D&D monster.

kelvingreen

07-06-2008 05:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9084943)

Still not perfect. It should be 40 % chance with Charisma 10 and additional 5 % per additional Charisma point, up to 80 % at Charisma 18.

Much better. :)

JRM

07-06-2008 06:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9085179)

I think what you're describing is the Tarrasque. :)

Not quite, I haven't added the Horns of Sharpness or the "will only stay dead with a *Wish*" yet.:)

JRM

07-06-2008 06:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Neurotrash (Post 9085483)

I think the humanoid Gargantua are supposed to be these things

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gargantuas>

I saw this on a Saturday afternoon when I was like, six, under the title of "War of the Gargantuas". I think it was the first time I ever came into contact with the word "gargantua" and I've always assumed it was the inspiration for the D&D monster.

Yup, I noticed the ah, purely coincidental resemblance too.

Incidentally Classic Media are going to be releasing a [double DVD of Rodan and War of the Gargantuas](#) this September. I'm looking forward to it! They do a good job of their DVDs, with both the US and the Japanese versions on the disc.

noisms

07-06-2008 10:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9085255)

I'm disappointed in this thread.

No bad gazebo jokes and obvious comic references yet?

The floor is yours... ;)

J Harper

07-06-2008 04:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9085296)

The "humanoid gargantua" was actually called Gargantua. At least, in the title. In the Sixties, Toho made two movies featuring a giant irradiated humanoid that formed from the heart of Frankenstein's Monster, caught in Hiroshima. The movies were Frankenstein Conquers the World and War of the Gargantuas.

It should be pointed out that the Monster of the first movie only rampages when threatened, like the D&D Humanoid Gargantua, but War of the Gargantuas features another, man-eating Gargantua as well.

I remember when Milk and Cheese remade *War of the Gargantuas* in their own inimitable style - which involved them running around, screaming at the top of their lungs, committing several acts of assault, battery, mayhem and vandalism, then, at the end, shouted at the tops of their lungs **"WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS!!!"**

Good times, good times...

Jeremy Harper

noisms

07-06-2008 11:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Gargoyle

Another in a long string of hits from the 'G' section, the Gargoyle is a particular favourite of mine - especially the Kapoacinth, with its hints of ruined cathedrals submerged beneath the ocean.

Gargoyle

The Gargoyle itself is a statued demon which lives in old ruins and dungeon environments. It likes torture and killing better than anything else, and will immediately attack anything which comes into its territory (on a 90% chance...why did this game have reaction adjustments for Charisma, again?). Gargoyles do not need to eat or drink, so they can wait motionless forever, just waiting for prey to come along. (How cool is that? A pack of Gargoyles who have been patiently sitting in the same place for a hundred years, just waiting for the opportunity to kill.) But sometimes they also serve evil mages.

My only regret is that Gargoyles are always Chaotic Evil. I'd quite like to include an empire of Lawful Evil Gargoyles in a campaign world; in a low magic setting even a fairly small number of Gargoyles, with their innate immunity to non-magical weapons, could easily take over a geographical area and enslave the population to their will.

Gargoyles are notable for having usable corpses (hooray!) - for potions of invulnerability and flying - and for having their own language, which must be up there with Elven Cat in the rarity stakes. I swear my next character is going to be fluent in both Elven Cat *and* Gargoyle.

Kapoacinth

As already mentioned, I'm a big fan of the Kapoacinth. The players, exploring the underwater world on some mission from the surface world, encounter what looks like a long-forgotten, submerged temple. Taking a closer look, they pass by two odd, ugly statues near the entrance... What could be better?

Margoyle

A "more horrid" form of Gargoyle, the Margoyle is essentially just a tougher version.

Wakboth

07-07-2008 12:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9084407)

(Hang on...Reptilian Gargantua = Godzilla. Insectoid Gargantua =Mothra?)

Add Rodan as a roc, and you're set for a city-stomping adventure; can your players lure the Gargantuas away from the city before it's completely flattened?

As for the gargoyles, I've always thought that in a world where there are nasty-looking living statues that kill and eat people, nobody sane would go near any statue they weren't completely sure about...

Overall, 'G' is definitely one of the best letters of the alphabet for monsters. :)

Tommy Brownell

07-07-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by brianm (Post 8743534)

I loved to use the aaracockra as part of my ancient triumvirate. In ancient times, before the rise of men and when elves still cavorted in the fairie realms (yes, I had the "feywild" long before 4th edition :D), the world was ruled and fought over by three races: the aaracockra, the thri-kreen, and the lizard folk. The ancient ruins of all three races can still be found if you know where to look, and each houses both magic and dangers the world hasn't seen since those far ancient days. The current, degenerate forms of all three races shun such places, and call them cursed, so adventurers looking to plunder these primordial cities shouldn't look for help from the descendants of their builders.

- Brian

That's kind of an awesome idea, actually.

Might file that one away for story theft, or something like it, should I ever run a fantasy game again.

(un)reason

07-07-2008 08:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9087234)

Gargoyle

My only regret is that Gargoyles are always Chaotic Evil. I'd quite like to include an empire of Lawful Evil Gargoyles in a campaign world; in a low magic setting even a fairly small number of Gargoyles, with their innate immunity to nor magical weapons, could easily take over a geographical area and enslave the population to their will.

Curiously enough, 1st ed AD&D gargoyles are LE. Gargoyles are one of those monsters that have gone through

several fluff divergences over the course of editions. In BD&D they're constructs, built by wizards and clerics to protect their stuff, while in AD&D they've been both things from the elemental plane of earth, prime material creatures that breed, and things that are vaguely demonic in origin. None have really stuck. I guess gargoyles have never acquired iconic fluff like the gith races or D&D orcs, despite being fairly popular as monsters.

lkrast

07-07-2008 10:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

This thread continues to be constructed of solid awesome.

noisms

07-07-2008 12:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9088532)

Curiously enough, 1st ed AD&D gargoyles are LE. Gargoyles are one of those monsters that have gone through several fluff divergences over the course of editions. In BD&D they're constructs, built by wizards and clerics to protect their stuff, while in AD&D they've been both things from the elemental plane of earth, prime material creatures that breed, and things that are vaguely demonic in origin. None have really stuck. I guess gargoyles have never acquired iconic fluff like the gith races or D&D orcs, despite being fairly popular as monsters.

They suffer from being reasonably popular, but not quite popular enough to become an icon, which means they can be dicked around with in each edition. I don't have the 4e core books - are Gargoyles in the 4e Monster Manual?

wingedcoyote

07-07-2008 12:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9089093)

They suffer from being reasonably popular, but not quite popular enough to become an icon, which means they can be dicked around with in each edition. I don't have the 4e core books - are Gargoyles in the 4e Monster Manual?

Yep! This time around they "came to the world long ago from the Elemental Chaos in search of prey."

They also have a mechanically-defined Stone Form ability that gives them very high damage resistance and some regeneration, as well as Tremorsense, in exchange for being an immobile statue. They can shift in and out at will, against a lot of parties I think they'd be very hard to hurt in that form, so that has the potential to be very annoying. :)

07-07-2008 01:04 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9089115)

Yep! This time around they "came to the world long ago from the Elemental Chaos in search of prey."

They also have a mechanically-defined Stone Form ability that gives them very high damage resistance and some regeneration, as well as Tremorsense, in exchange for being an immobile statue. They can shift in and out at will, against a lot of parties I think they'd be very hard to hurt in that form, so that has the potential to be very annoying. :)

I think I prefer the 2e ones out of all of the editions, then. Close to real-world Gargoyles (i.e. statues on big buildings), but animated long ago by an evil arch-mage. It's just that little bit more interesting than "oh, they came from the Elemental plane of Earth/came from Elemental Chaos/are demons/are constructs".

wingedcoyote

07-07-2008 01:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9089202)

I think I prefer the 2e ones out of all of the editions, then. Close to real-world Gargoyles (i.e. statues on big buildings) but animated long ago by an evil arch-mage. It's just that little bit more interesting than "oh, they came from the Elemental plane of Earth/came from Elemental Chaos/are demons/are constructs".

I agree, and that's the explanation I'd use if I ever needed one in my campaign.

6inTruder

07-07-2008 02:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9089115)

They also have a mechanically-defined Stone Form ability that gives them very high damage resistance and some regeneration, as well as Tremorsense, in exchange for being an immobile statue. They can shift in and out at will, against a lot of parties I think they'd be very hard to hurt in that form, so that has the potential to be very annoying. :)

So they're sorta the Aliens of D&D's overdecorated cathedrals and crypts?

Brandi

07-07-2008 02:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 8922627)

I would have loved to have seen PETA girl try to write an entry on them. :D

You do realize for all your ranting about "PETA girl" these entries were more likely to have been written by some neckbearded male furry?

[Edit: Reducing harshness level, but from the way noisms talks it sounds like the Wolf entry was written by someone like the infamous Ebonlupus.]

Brandi

07-07-2008 03:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9001622)

There's some Greyhawk material by the late lamented Gary Gygax which suggests Derro are mutant humans, not dwarves, and that's the way I view them in my campaign.

Gary would've been a little young to be reading early-/mid- '40s SF when it first came out, but it wouldn't surprise me if he came across some of the old *Amazing Stories* articles about [The Shaver Mystery](#).

kelvingreen

07-07-2008 05:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The *Doctor Who* episode "Blink" does a lot of good for Gargoyles and other looks-like-a-statue type monsters. They're basically quantum creatures who literally are statues when you look at them, but run around free when not observed. Quite creepy, and I think it would be fun to transfer that to a game.

Celisasu

07-07-2008 06:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Skims Ye Olde 2nd Edition Monster Manual along with various Monster Compendiums When we get all the way through the MM I'm tempted to do this with the Dark Sun stuff. :)

While I approve of the superior balance of 4E monsters compared to 2E or 3E monsters, I miss 2E's fluff. Comparing the same monsters in the 2E, 3E, and 4E books(which I'm doing right now), you can see the shift from fluff to crunch. 2E monsters tend to have more fluff than 3E monsters which have more than 4E monsters(some 4E monsters only get

two lines of text in fact).

Now switching to gargoyles in 2E, I remember facing these in a Ravenloft campaign a friend ran once. In all honesty it was probably our worst campaign but then again it was also one of our first so it's understandable how many things went wrong. The gargoyle fight actually went okay though. We fought two of them along with a golem. The golem was the real threat. We went after the gargoyles first though figuring they'd die faster and that'd be less things hitting us.

ogier300

07-07-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

you can see the shift from fluff to crunch.

Back in the day, we thought of that "fluffs" as crunch... Which is one of the reasons the MM and MC were so chock full of adventure ideas.

Frank Armoton

07-07-2008 08:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Celisasu (Post 9089716)

2E monsters tend to have more fluff than 3E monsters which have more than 4E monsters(some 4E monsters only get two lines of text in fact).

I noticed this also. It is really a shame, the old monster descriptions were really entertaining.. Now most you get is the name of the monster, a (pretty!) picture and stat-block..

Celisasu

07-07-2008 08:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Hell, let me use the Aarakocra from Dark Sun Monstrous Compendium 2 as an example. It has almost two full pages that are solely devoted to fluff. Even the combat section has more fluff than stats in it. I kid you not. It's not until halfway into the 2nd paragraph of the combat section that it gives you a combat statistic(double damage for diving if the dive is at least 50 feet). Before that is explanation of why they prefer aerial combat(it's the hollow bones. They realize that their bones break a lot more easily than human ones). It then gives a few more combat stats.....and gives some more paragraphs of fluff info. Then you get 2/3rds of a page of habitat/society and about 1/4 page of ecology.

noisms

07-07-2008 10:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9089402)

You do realize for all your ranting about "PETA girl" these entries were more likely to have been written by some neckbearded male furry?

[Edit: Reducing harshness level, but from the way noisms talks it sounds like the Wolf entry was written by someone like the infamous Ebonlupus.]

Oh, the PETA girl stuff is just tongue-in-cheek. She's entirely imaginary. It's just funnier for me to envisage a 13-year-old vegan in the TSR offices, chastising all the other monster designers and ranting about how vicious beasts are just misunderstood.

EDIT: And yes, definitely more likely written by a neckbearded male furry.

JRM

07-08-2008 05:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9088532)

Curiously enough, 1st ed AD&D gargoyles are LE. Gargoyles are one of those monsters that have gone through several fluff divergences over the course of editions. In BD&D they're constructs, built by wizards and clerics to protect their stuff, while in AD&D they've been both things from the elemental plane of earth, prime material creatures that breed, and things that are vaguely demonic in origin. None have really stuck. I guess gargoyles have never acquired iconic fluff like the gith races or D&D orcs, despite being fairly popular as monsters.

Eh? They're Chaotic Evil in 1st edition too, unless my memory plays me false. Their multiple origins are certainly confusing though - are they magical constructs? demonic creatures? elementals? supernatural material-plane predator? Not to mention all the confusion as to how you get more gargoyles (eggs? babies? some wizard mucking about?), and whether they're really made out of rock or have flesh and blood insides.

I've never known a gargoyle to succeed at its "I'll just stand very still and pretend to be a statue of a demonic creature, why would anyone suspect me" strategy and, frankly, why should it in the default milieu of AD&D? I came up with two ways around this -

A 'standing very still' gargoyle could blend into rock surfaces, becoming almost perfectly camouflage.

A 'standing very still' gargoyle could look like a less obviously threatening statue using a weak form of alter self - so that statue of the naked nymph suddenly spouts wings, claws, horns and a tail and leaps upon you!

wingedcoyote

07-08-2008 05:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9091509)

Eh? They're Chaotic Evil in 1st edition too, unless my memory plays me false. Their multiple origins are certainly confusing though - are they magical constructs? demonic creatures? elementals? supernatural material-plane predator? Not to mention all the confusion as to how you get more gargoyles (eggs? babies? some wizard mucking about?), and whether they're really made out of rock or have flesh and blood insides.

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A 'standing very still' gargoyle could look like a less obviously threatening statue using a weak form of alter self - so that statue of the naked nymph suddenly spouts wings, claws, horns and a tail and leaps upon you!

Good ideas. Wouldn't it be pretty easy to spring a regular gargoyle encounter on players, though, if you planned ahead properly? Just toss a lot of (non-animate) gargoyles all over the place, and eventually the players should get used to them.

JasonK

07-08-2008 05:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9091571)

Good ideas. Wouldn't it be pretty easy to spring a regular gargoyle encounter on players, though, if you planned ahead properly? Just toss a lot of (non-animate) gargoyles all over the place, and eventually the players should get used to them.

Or they'll smash every damn statue they ever see because they know that one day one of them will be a gargoyle. :)

But, yeah, I'd put regular stone statues around, too.

~ jason

noisms

07-08-2008 12:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Genie

A mammoth entry, with four (count 'em) pictures - two of which were especially interesting to my male 13-year-old mind. I'm sure you can guess which ones.

Djinn

Djinn are Genies from the Plane of Air. They ride around on whirlwinds, and can create food and water, soft goods, wooden goods, metal, illusions, wine...you name it. Ordinary Djinn can't grant wishes - that's only available to a Noble Djinni, who can give three. (Although we all know the way around *that*. "For my first wish, a night of passion with [insert favourite Hollywood starlet here], for my second, a kazillion gold pieces, and for my third.... TEN MILLION MORE WISHES!!!!")

Dao

Dao are from the Plane of Earth, and they come to the Prime Material because they like to "work evil" so damn much. They can grant *limited wishes* but only ever in a perverse way, and live in a place called the Great Dismal Delve. That seems like an odd choice to me; okay, your hometown may be dismal, but even if it is, don't shout about it. Then nobody's ever going to want to visit.

Efreet

Efreet are from the Plane of Fire, and are the enemies and rivals of the Djinn. As with the Dao, they interpret their *wish* commands in perverse and overly literal ways, mainly out of spite.

Marid

These are the most powerful of all the Genies. (Does this have a basis in Middle-Eastern legend, or is it just a decision of the designers?) They come from the Plane of Water, and are typical Chaotic Neutral monsters - unpredictable, egotistical, and boorish, just like a Topaz Dragon.

Jann

Jann are the weakest Genies, and are composed of all four elements. They look like humans and live a nomadic existence in the desert.

One thing I noted about the Genie entry is that each 'race' is modeled after a different Middle Eastern culture. Djinn are ruled by a Caliph, and so are meant to be like 'Arabian' Arabs. Dao have a Khanate, with Atamans and Hetmans, and so are roughly modeled after the nomads of Eurasia. Efreet have a Sultanate, which makes them like Turks. Marid have a Padishate, like old Persia. And Jann are like Bedouin.

wingedcoyote

07-08-2008 12:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I was a big fan of the Jann at age 12 as well. :)

Something that jumped out at me, rereading the genie entry -- there are lots of places throughout the book where it tells you something like "1% of Djinni are Noble". Back in the day, I think I took that as being synonymous with "if you meet a Djinn, there is a 1% chance that it is Noble". I think later on I realized I could just decide that the party meets a Noble Djinn (for example), but it felt a little bit like cheating.

demiurge1138

07-08-2008 01:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I know--when I was a kid, that blue efreet intrigued me too. "Why is it blue?" I asked myself.

Oh yeah, and that jann was pretty hot, I guess.

Naxuul

07-08-2008 01:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9092862)

I know--when I was a kid, that blue efreet intrigued me too. "Why is it blue?" I asked myself.

It's supposed to be black, but black in that ink style is just a real dark blue, because black is the color of basalt and the Efreeti description says they are made of fleshy basalt.

I've liked the D&D genies ever since I played the Al-Qadim PC game. At one point you go to a island where the genies send their earthly ambassadors and have to deal with essentially iconic members of each Noble Genie. It was very flavorful and fun, from being unintentionally dicked around by the well meaning but uncaring Djinni to having to maintain the interest of a egotistical, hedonistic and jaded Marid.

Plus fun stuff like the Efreeti guardian of the Island sends you on alot of pointless quests to prove your worth for entrance.. including getting the World's Wisest Snake. Which she then promptly eats and informs you if it was so wise it would of avoided that.

-Naxuul

Crinos

07-08-2008 03:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always thought the efreet was more purple than blue. Ah well.

The Marid, OTOH, was definitely blue, and Hot.

wingedcoyote

07-08-2008 03:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9093094)

The Marid, OTOH, was definitely blue, and Hot.

That's the one I always thought was a Jann, but now that I look at it again you're definitely right.

noisms

07-08-2008 04:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Even if that black jacket thing is a little too conveniently gravity resistant.

Crinos

07-08-2008 04:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9093235)

Even if that black jacket thing is a little too conveniently gravity resistant.

Well she is a Genie afterall. +2 Jacket of nipple coverage is probably a fairly commonplace item on the Elemental plane of water.

What always cheesed me though is we never got a definitive picture of the Dao.

Celisasu

07-08-2008 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9092705)

Genie

A mammoth entry, with four (count 'em) pictures - two of which were especially interesting to my male 13-year-old mind. I'm sure you can guess which ones.

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Djinn are Genies from the Plane of Air. They ride around on whirlwinds, and can create food and water, soft goods, wooden goods, metal, illusions, wine...you name it. Ordinary Djinn can't grant wishes - that's only available to a Noble Djinni, who can give three. (Although we all know the way around that. "For my first wish, a night of passion with [insert favourite Hollywood starlet here], for my second, a kazillion gold pieces, and for my third.... TEN MILLION MORE WISHES!!!!")

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I remember a friend commenting on the Marid once. We got into a weird debate about about where half-Marids and could a human man or woman survive them seeing how the description put them at 18' tall if I remember correctly.

JRM

07-08-2008 07:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by wingedcoyote (Post 9091571)

Good ideas. Wouldn't it be pretty easy to spring a regular gargoyle encounter on players, though, if you planned ahead properly? Just toss a lot of (non-animate) gargoyles all over the place, and eventually the players should get used to them.

Yes, the only time I remember some gargoyles coming close to succeeding at their pretend to be regular statues tactic was as part of the traditional "evil temple festooned with ghastly images", I think the gargoyles didn't attack until the party left the temple, which helped their surprise...

Nevertheless, it's a hard sell for experienced D&D players who, rightly, are **extremely** suspicious of statues, especially demon/gargoyle shaped ones and it may take an awful long time for them to get used to them. I know If I had a PC in such a location there'd be a lot on *Detect Evil* going on those statues, just in case.

Evil temples help neutralize that ploy since you can just say the unholy aura of the altar (or wherever) makes everything detect as evil. They're also one of the few places that seem justified in having lots of inanimate statues of gargoyles. There doesn't seem much call for people of good alignment to create them for warning/warding against evil forces - unlike medieval Europe, most D&D characters would need no reminding about the perils of supernatural Evil.

JRM

07-08-2008 07:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Celisasu (Post 9093474)

I remember a friend commenting on the Marid once. We got into a weird debate about about where half-Marids and could a human man or woman survive them seeing how the description put them at 18' tall if I remember correctly.

As the great Gygax himself once said concerning the possibility of a Pixie/Storm Giant half breed, all you need is a *Philter of Love* and a *Potion of Growth*.:)

JRM

07-08-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Anyhows, back in my old 1st edition AD&D days one of my player's had a couple of unfortunate experiences with Genies.

Firstly, they were playing ***Mordenkainen's Magnificent Adventure*** with the pregen characters and met the Weaver in his twenty foot cube of a workshop. After some waffling, he revealed himself to be an Efreet and we roll initiative.

DM: Okay (name withheld to prevent embarrassment), what does Bigby do?

Bigby: *Fireball!*

DM: Are you sure you want to *Fireball!* an Efreet while your party is standing in a 20' cube with it?

Bigby: Sure.

A lot of dice rolling later, half the party (including Bigby) are *Fireball*-charred corpses. The Efreet is completely unharmed, of course, having immunity to fire.

Secondly, the same PC was part of a party delving into ***The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*** and they met some Dao in a 25' long cave - this is the first adventure ever to feature these monsters, incidentally. Bigby had learned his lesson about using *Fireball* in enclosed spaces by then.

He cast *Lightning Bolt* instead.

Do you know 1st edition's rules about *Lightning Bolt* ricochets? After some dice rolling and playing about with a protractor I determined he'd managed to kill most of the Dao, and himself.

Good times, good times.:)

Wakboth

07-08-2008 08:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9092705)

One thing I noted about the Genie entry is that each 'race' is modeled after a different Middle Eastern culture. Djinn are ruled by a Caliph, and so are meant to be like 'Arabian' Arabs. Dao have a Khanate, with Atamans and Hetmans, and so are roughly modeled after the nomads of Eurasia. Efreet have a Sultanate, which makes them like Turks.

Marid have a Padishate, like old Persia. And Jann are like Bedouin.

Yeah, that was a nifty little bit of implied worldbuilding.

And the blue marid lady is still my favorite of the genie pics. :D

Edit: IIRC, we very quickly houseruled the "rebounding lightning bolts" / "fully expanding fireballs" away, or at least into something a bit less omnidestructive. Sure, it's amusing for the DM when the wizard accidentally burninates himself... but the rest of the party may not enjoy it as much, and soon enough you're having to deal with players using FAE-style fireballs to wipe out entire dungeons.

see

07-09-2008 04:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9093564)

Do you know 1st edition's rules about Lightning Bolt ricochets? After some dice rolling and playing about with a protractor I determined he'd managed to kill most of the Dao, and himself.

Er. But the rule specifically was that the *lightning bolt* will "rebound toward its caster", so who needs a protractor? The angle at which it hits the wall is irrelevant.

JRM

07-09-2008 05:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9095106)

Er. But the rule specifically was that the lightning bolt will "rebound toward its caster", so who needs a protractor? The angle at which it hits the wall is irrelevant.

Oh, I'd interpreted the DMG entry on Lightning Bolt as meaning the line of the lightning bounced off solid, smooth surfaces in a similar manner to light-beams reflecting off mirrors, so it could reflect off at an angle.

(I didn't actually use a protractor, by the way - that would have been silly.:p)

That reminds me, at one time I wanted to have an enemy magic-user install carefully angled and highly polished steel shields around a dungeon's corridors, so they could shoot lightning bolts round corners. Never happened, alas.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ghost

D&D Ghosts are the kind who are still hanging around and haunting an area because of some great injustice - other types of spirit-visions are put under the Phantom entry.

I remember accusing the Catoblepas of being the most unfair of monsters, but I think the Ghost gives it a good run for its money: A monster immune to silver and non-magical weapons, which ages you 10 years *on sight* if you fail a saving throw, and which ages you 10-40 years on a successful hit. If it kills you it leaves you permanently dead with no hope of resurrection. And to top it off, it can only be hit by spells cast by *other* ethereal creatures.

Talk about cheap.

The best way to do away with a Ghost is to put right whatever situation led to the person's death - typically by bringing revenge down on the head of whoever did wrong. So a woman who was jilted by a lover and killed herself would demand retribution against the man responsible, or whatever. A good adventure hook, if a little cheesy. "The old fellow at the bar sidles up to you and says, 'Have you heard the tale of Old Nell, who hung herself by moonlight....?'"

The entry ends with this, which made me laugh: "The dreadful fear caused by the ghost, which ages a victim 10 years, is not well understood by the common man, who often ascribes it to the fact that a ghost is 'dead.' If this were the case, then certainly skeletons and zombies would have the same effect, which they do not. Common folklore further confuses this fact by relating details of the ghost's physical form: the classic example of which is the headless horseman, thought by many to be particularly frightening simply because he had no head. Under this belief, one could face a ghost if only one had the courage to stand up to him. Such a mistaken impression has cost many lives over the years. Actually, the fear is caused by the supernatural power of the ghost, and has nothing whatsoever to do with courage."

wingedcoyote

07-09-2008 12:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9095230)

Oh, I'd interpreted the DMG entry on Lightning Bolt as meaning the line of the lightning bounced off solid, smooth surfaces in a similar manner to light-beams reflecting off mirrors, so it could reflect off at an angle.

That's my reading too.

Reason #1: It's cooler that way.

Reason #2: That's how it works in *Crawl*. :)

Celisasu

07-09-2008 03:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ah, old school D&D from 1st and 2nd Edition. Where death was far more brutal and often far more permanent. And energy drain was even more fun than in 3rd Edition.

Ghosts sure were dicks weren't they? Our group never faced them though thankfully.

Crinos

07-09-2008 03:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I always liked Ghosts, their aging power made them so unique.

noisms

07-09-2008 10:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9096791)
I always liked Ghosts, their aging power made them so unique.

I always thought it would be fun to role play a guy zapped from the age of 20 to 60 by a Ghost.

Wakboth

07-09-2008 11:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9096791)
I always liked Ghosts, their aging power made them so unique.

Of course, it totally screwed humans, was pretty bad for halflings, gnomes and dwarves, and had very little to no impact on elves. Go 2e! :D

Malignant Marionette

07-10-2008 12:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9097537)
I always thought it would be fun to role play a guy zapped from the age of 20 to 60 by a Ghost.

Provided you survive the system shock roll, that is. ;)

Just noticed there's a 6th level priest spell that restores youth lost to magic, ghosts and stuff so it won't fuck you up permanently. Thought they were pretty evil before I found it. :p

noisms

07-10-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

1000th post!!!!!!

Waaaaaaahhhhhh!!!!!!!

Carry on.

6inTruder

07-10-2008 04:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9097537)

I always thought it would be fun to role play a guy zapped from the age of 20 to 60 by a Ghost.

Ah.... The "fun" of my Third level Druid's combat effectiveness going from "eh" to "crap." Memories....

noisms

07-10-2008 11:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Ghoul

The 'G' section just keeps rolling out the hits. Ghouls are another personal favourite, guaranteed to make an appearance in one of my campaigns.

I love the description of Ghouls: "the change from human to ghoul has *deranged and destroyed* their minds"; "the tongue becomes long and tough for licking marrow from cracked bones"; they have a "terrible cunning". Great OTT stuff.

Obviously, Ghouls main trick is to cause paralysis. I'd be interested to know what the design decision behind that was: who was it who decided that D&D Ghouls should have that power - and does it have any basis in legend or fairy tales? Regardless, it's a nasty ability that's enough to make Ghouls genuinely scary. Even better is the way those killed by Ghouls become Ghouls themselves - we all know how fun it is to come across ex-party members who have to be killed, and Ghouls are a way of pulling this off. (Another favourite is Lycanthropy.)

As an added bonus to the entry, the Ghoul section closes with a pleasingly ridiculous line: "Ghouls (and ghosts, as

described later) delight in revolting and loathsome things -- from which we draw our adjectives 'ghoulish' and 'ghastly.'"

Lacedon

A Lacedon is a marine Ghoul which is most frequently found around shipwrecks.

Ghast

A Ghast is like a super-Ghoul, whose paralysis is so powerful it can even affect elves, and who stinks so badly of carrion that it causes *nausea*.

Kakita Kojiro

07-10-2008 11:23 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9092705)

Marid

These are the most powerful of all the Genies. (Does this have a basis in Middle-Eastern legend, or is it just a decision of the designers?) They come from the Plane of Water, and are typical Chaotic Neutral monsters - unpredictable, egotistical, and boorish, just like a Topaz Dragon.

Yes, there is a basis for that in Arabic folklore, although it is not something from the Quran as far as I know. Wiki suggests it might come from the Nights, but I'm leery of trusting wiki on this topic (people tend to muddle their sources -- I've seen obviously D&D sourced material plonked down in there without qualm). The marid association with water also apparently has some basis in folklore, although the efreet association with fire does not AFAIK (other than that all jinn are "beings of smokeless flame").

There's actually not much coherence to the folklore, though. For example, it is never really clear if marid and ifrit are a *type* of jinn, or a *tribe* of jinn -- and are sometimes *both*. The "source" material (such as the Quran) is not big on the taxonomy of jinn. And adding transliteration only muddies the waters -- "jinn", "djinn", "jann", and "genie" all mean the same thing.

I've never been able to find out where "dao" came from, though.

edit: oddly appropriate to be ninja'd by the Ghoul post...

noisms

07-10-2008 11:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9100204)

I've never been able to find out where "dao" came from, though.

It might just be because they already had fire, water and air slots filled in, needed a djinni of earth, and made something up.

kelvingreen

07-10-2008 05:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I've never been able to work out, and this may be a Lovecraft influence, whether *D&D* ghouls are actually dead. Aside from being killed by a ghoul and then subsequently rising as one, the general fluff on the creatures seems to describe them as humanoids that feast on the dead and thus take on aspects of said food source.

But then there are references to ghouls speaking the language they spoke "in life", and they also get turned like (un)dead things. It's always been a mystery to me. Are ghouls dead, or are they living things with undead attributes? Answer this for me, rpg.net! ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9100204)

And adding transliteration only muddies the waters -- "jinn", "djinn", "jann", and "genie" all mean the same thing.

edit: oddly appropriate to be ninja'd by the Ghoul post...

Indeed. Ghouls in Arabian folklore are also sometimes considered a type of jinn!

noisms

07-10-2008 07:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9101208)

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Indeed. Ghouls in Arabian folklore are also sometimes considered a type of jinn!

I always thought that ghouls were a combination of people who were killed by other ghouls, or cannibals who had eaten one too many corpses. A bit like the Wendigo of Native American legend.

Sleeper

07-10-2008 10:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9101208)

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I always thought it was pretty clear that ghouls in D&D were undead. They spawn, they're a line on the turning table, and the text explicitly says they're undead. Almost mindless, and cartoonishly evil.

Which kind of disappointed me. I wanted cults of corrupted and degenerate nobles who have grisly banquets where they devour entire peasants with their preternaturally mobile mouths; and who, in police society, wear half-masks and are always cloaked by the sickly sweet smell of attar and other heavy perfumes. I wanted desperate halflings in the wilderness who take elevenses on an errant kobold child, and are turned into ravening and feral wendigo by the ancient curse, until they are put down like beasts. I wanted a caste of untouchables who are responsible for taking care of the dead and ensuring that they do not rise and plague the living; yet if you deign to speak to one, she is surprisingly cosmopolitan and urbane, and in their ever present inconspicuousness they hear everything, and their rumor network rivals the greatest imperial spy networks.

Lovecraft, Niven, Canadian myth....

noisms

07-10-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9101827)

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Lovecraft, Niven, Canadian myth....

I want those things too! Thank God I'm not alone!

I always thought, though, that ghouls made the *most* sense of any of the spawning undead -- at least there was some implication that they had to *eat*. All of the rest apparently need no sustenance, and can spawn endlessly with minimal effort... especially if they can get their claws on some NPCs (rather than PCs). And they have no natural predators to keep their population in check (other than PCs).

It is a wonder that Greyhawk wasn't overrun by sudden hordes of ghouls, wights, vampires, etc. The place should look like a zombie apocalypse movie, really.

Sleeper

07-11-2008 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9101961)

It is a wonder that Greyhawk wasn't overrun by sudden hordes of ghouls, wights, vampires, etc. The place should look like a zombie apocalypse movie, really.

Yes, I've always wondered about that.

Another thing I always wanted to do was run a campaign based on that premise. Adventurers aren't just random thugs who go out and kill things that go bump in the night. No, they're *sanctioned* thugs who go out and kill things that go bump in the night. Chartered and empowered by the crown, they are above the law and have almost unlimited powers to question, detain... and slaughter entire villages if need be. Because they're the one thing that stands between the kingdom and the tides of darkness. Necromancy, the undead, lycanthropes, aren't just occasional threats, random monsters. They're a plague. A disease, that spreads like wildfire and might just consume the world. They need to be stamped out. By any means necessary. The PCs are tarred black and morally reprehensible, but it needs to be done. Someone needs to stop any incipient outbreak before it starts spreading wildly out of control. They call in the legions who quarantine the area, and then the crazy bastards go in. The retirement package is amazing. Unfortunately, there are long odds you'll never claim it.

And if the PCs fail?

Well, there's a real life model for the consequences. The black death wiped out something like 40% of the population of Europe. Entire cities were quarantined by force, or burned to the ground. Lines of penitents walked from town to town flagellating themselves and prostrating before the gods. Wagons with bells called "bring out your dead". Horribly disfigured survivors hid their faces. Cults of nobles walled themselves up in their manors, and threw massively decadent balls in the hopes that red death wouldn't find its way in. The death toll lead to the foundation of the modern world, because the peasant population became suddenly valuable and turned mobile, breaking their ties of servitude to the land and creating the foundation for a sizeable middle class.

Except, this isn't a mindless disease. It's cunning, and hungry. The only place left to retreat might be the underground. The dungeons. Hordes of refugees at the walls of the dwarven strongholds. Accommodations and deals being made with the great evils of the underdark. Entire nations voluntarily become the herds of the mind flayers, because becoming cattle and accepting the occasionally culling is less horrible than the plague scouring all life from the surface. Some converting to the worship of the slimy yet compellingly half-human goddess of the kuo-toa. Some choose to become something other than human, by the caress of an aboleth's tentacles.

The free and young races of the surface have forgotten, but this is the perpetual cycle of the world. Time and time again they came crawling back to their elder masters, asking once again to be slaves. Again and again, the ancient races have taken them as their brood, and the cycle of the world turns to its usual darkness.

Until, generations upon generations later, the races rebel and break their voluntary shackles once again, under the sway of a fierce like the legendary Gith. For a time, at least. The old races simply retreat, pull back, and wait. Their memories are long, and they know these brash upstarts will soon enough come crawling back to the succor of the night. They need not plot, or plan, or scheme. Simply wait.

Pat

JasonK

07-11-2008 04:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9101926)
I want those things too! Thank God I'm not alone!

You are very much not alone. That's pretty much what I've always wanted out of ghouls, too.

That said, I don't actually mind them being undead. The two are not mutually exclusive and, as vampires like Strahd have proved, the line between life and undeath does not need to be crossed with a moment of death and violence.

~ jason

Setebos

07-11-2008 05:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9101961)
I always thought, though, that ghouls made the most sense of any of the spawning undead -- at least there was some implication that they had to eat. All of the rest apparently need no sustenance, and can spawn endlessly with minimal effort... especially if they can get their claws on some NPCs (rather than PCs). And they have no natural predators to keep their population in check (other than PCs).

It is a wonder that Greyhawk wasn't overrun by sudden hordes of ghouls, wights, vampires, etc. The place should look like a zombie apocalypse movie, really.

That's an excellent point, actually...I'm ashamed I didn't realize it earlier.

I think I get so blinded by genre convention that I forget to ask for any kind of verisimilitude. What do fantasy zombies do? They lurk in crypts. What do modern zombies do? They spread like a plague. Why?

In keeping with the perpetual awesomeness of this thread, I'm now inspired to think, really think, about the

ecology of undeath. Assuming it's not a new phenomenon in most fantasy worlds, the easy replicability and (apparently) unlimited energy of the undead should have radically altered (demi-)human society, but most people (myself included) play it like a pseudo-medieval kingdom that has apparently developed in a tiny, zombie-free bottle, and is perpetually surprised by the walking dead. In a low-magic world, I can keep my disbelief suspended, but places like the Forgotten Realms really have no excuse.

Onward to verisimilitude.

Belchion

07-11-2008 06:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9103084)

What do fantasy zombies do? They lurk in crypts. What do modern zombies do? They spread like a plague. Why?

Because ancient people tended to build undead-proof crypts. Once in, they won't get out again. Nowadays, we tend to overlook this problem and not take proper care in sealing our crypts anymore. Not to forget that in fantasy settings, there are usually plenty of gods and heroes around who slaughter undead for a living, you lack those guys in the modern world.

Not to forget the other reason: In ancient times, the undead were often the result of improper burial or an unclean death. You forgot to add the Obulus? How bad, aunt Agnetha will spook till she can afford to cross the Styx. That guy was drowned in blood and you forgot the proper cleansing rites? Too bad, he will be hunting for even more blood. In modern times, improper burial is not that much a point in the creation of undead, them as symbol of de-humanized humanity became much more important, as can best be seen by the treatment of vampires.

Anaxamander

07-11-2008 07:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9103084)

In keeping with the perpetual awesomeness of this thread, I'm now inspired to think, really think, about the ecology of undeath.

Perhaps ghouls eat other undead. That would work pretty well I think, at least for the lower ranks. (and maybe the higher ranks don't want competition) Although you might end up with ghouls farmers, i.e. ghouls who keep herds of zombies and feed them living beings to keep the herd size stable.

noisms

07-11-2008 10:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Anaxamander (Post 9103531)

Although you might end up with ghouls farmers, i.e. ghouls who keep herds of zombies and feed them living beings to keep the herd size stable.

How's that for an adventure seed?

noisms

07-11-2008 10:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9102391)

Except, this isn't a mindless disease. It's cunning, and hungry. The only place left to retreat might be the underground. The dungeons. Hordes of refugees at the walls of the dwarven strongholds. Accommodations and deals being made with the great evils of the underdark. Entire nations voluntarily become the herds of the mind flayers, because becoming cattle and accepting the occasionally culling is less horrible than the plague scouring all life from the surface. Some converting to the worship of the slimy yet compellingly half-human goddess of the kuo-toa. Some choose to become something other than human, by the caress of an aboleth's tentacles.

The free and young races of the surface have forgotten, but this is the perpetual cycle of the world. Time and time again they came crawling back to their elder masters, asking once again to be slaves. Again and again, the ancient races have taken them as their brood, and the cycle of the world turns to its usual darkness.

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Pat

Love it.

lkrast

07-11-2008 11:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9101827)

Which kind of disappointed me. I wanted cults of corrupted and degenerate nobles who have grisly banquets where they devour entire peasants with their preternaturally mobile mouths

Friend, the American presidential campaigns have been going on for *months* now. Haven't you had *enough*?

(Yes, sorry, I know, take it to Tangency, etc.)

Wakboth

07-11-2008 03:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

One odd thing about ghouls: I don't think they've ever had a good illustration in any of the MMs. The 1e one is by the non-Trampier and therefore crap; the Monstrous Manual one is horribly cartoony; the 3e one is just awful (one of the cases where the quality of art went *way down* between editions); and I can't remember the 4e version.

This one's good third-party pic, I think: <http://pachycrocuta.deviantart.com/a...ketch-71929048> (The same fellow does excellent D&D- and RPG-inspired stuff in general.)

noisms

07-11-2008 05:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9104708)

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This one's good third-party pic, I think: <http://pachycrocuta.deviantart.com/a...ketch-71929048> (The same fellow does excellent D&D- and RPG-inspired stuff in general.)

I agree the art isn't great for the Ghoul anywhere in D&D. The guy you linked to is much better, although his Ghouls seem strongly influenced by Gollum in the LOTR films (especially the top figure).

Anyway, we have Giants coming up. I'll try to do three per entry; I've learned my lesson after the Dragon marathon, which turned into a brutal, awful slog.

kelvingreen

07-11-2008 05:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9101926)

I want those things too! Thank God I'm not alone!

Me too. I've always found the idea of the degenerate ghoul more interesting than the undead ghoul. That's probably where my confusion lies. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9102391)
Yes, I've always wondered about that.

Another thing I always wanted to do was run a campaign based on that premise. Adventurers aren't just random thugs who go out and kill things that go bump in the night...

It's dark, but it's brilliant.

As for the ecology of the undead, China Mieville's High Cromlech, sketched out in *The Scar*, is a fascinating approach to an undead society, particularly in the way vampires are handled, more like desperate drug users than noble hunters.

noisms

07-11-2008 06:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9104851)
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As for the ecology of the undead, China Mieville's High Cromlech, sketched out in The Scar is a fascinating approach to an undead society, particularly in the way vampires are handled, more like desperate drug users than noble hunters.

Yeah, High Cromlech is a really nice concept. I like how the language incorporates mime and signing, because many of the population no longer have vocal cords with which to speak!

noisms

07-11-2008 10:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Okay, Giants, here we go, take a deep breath....

Giant, C-D

Cloud Giant

I always thought of the Cloud Giants as the Elves of Gianthood. You know - highly intelligent, appreciate the finer things in life, into magic, nice jewelery, playing the harp.... Pass me the sick bucket!

No, I'm being unfair. Cloud Giants are one of the better Giants, in my opinion, although the one in the picture looks a

bit like a vampire. A Greek or Roman vampire, possibly. Or a refugee from one of the worse Star Trek Original Series episodes - one of those races who were encountered by the Enterprise and never spoken of again.

Cloud Giants live in small clans at the tops of mountains or on "magical cloud islands" which they mine for silver lining. (That's check number two for that gag....I wonder how many times it will appear over the course of the book?) The evil ones raid the local areas and beat up the humanoids living there; the good ones like to trade.

Cyclops and Cyclopskin

There are two kinds of Cyclops - Cyclopskin and proper Cyclops. They're basically the same thing - just bigger or smaller versions of a one-eyed Giant which herd sheep and "smell of equal parts dirt and dung".

I like to imagine Cyclops and Cyclopskin as the degenerate remnants of a race which once ruled the world. Like the humans in *The Planet of the Apes*, they have regressed into creatures of lower intelligence. The shattered ruins of their statues and monuments can still be found here and there, but nobody knows what they signify and the Cyclopskin are no longer intelligent enough to explain.

Desert Giant

There's a bit of annoying setting-specific stuff in this entry, but that's by the by - I rather like Desert Giants, who remind me of a sort of combination of Bedouin, Touareg and Masai.

By far the most intriguing aspect of these ones is their ancient curse of fossilisation - which gradually transforms them into stone over the course of their lives. I love the idea of an entire race being condemned to the same fate, which none of them know how to solve. In fact, I seem to remember one of the Native American *fae* from *Changeling: The Dreaming* having a similar curse. The Navajo spirits... I forget the name. Numazahu or something?

Desert Giants once had a civilisation of their own, but the curse has destroyed it - now they're just roaming nomads, who typically end up in conflict with pastoral peoples. (Quite realistic, that.) They find employment as mercenaries most often.

Lugh

07-11-2008 11:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9105473)
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I like to imagine Cyclops and Cyclopskin as the degenerate remnants of a race which once ruled the world. Like the humans in The Planet of the Apes, they have regressed into creatures of lower intelligence. The shattered ruins of their statues and monuments can still be found here and there, but nobody knows what they signify and the Cyclopskin are no longer intelligent enough to explain.

Hmm. I was just thinking about what the old Cyclops empire would look like. The art would have one-eyed beings as significant elements. What other one-eyed beings do we know? Perhaps Gruumsh was either once a god of the Cyclops, or was a Cyclops himself when the orcs were a slave race.

So, imagine a world in which cyclops rule a mighty empire. Their intelligentsia learn the secrets of fantasy-style bioengineering and eugenics. Gradually, a rift begins to occur, as the intelligentsia modify themselves to

become more and more powerful. They actually remove their own bodies, as unnecessary appendages, relying solely on their heads, the seat of their power. They add more and more eyes, and give those eyes greater and greater magical abilities. Eventually, a civil war erupts, and the empire falls.

Ten thousand years later, only a rare few scholars suspect that the cyclops and the beholders were once one people.

Kakita Kojiro

07-11-2008 11:00 PM

Splitting up the Cyclops and Cyclopskin (which reads like it's Cyclop-skin, doesn't it?) is probably an attempt to capture the dichotomy of Greek myth, where the cyclopes are both godlike crafters of Zeus' thunderbolts, helms of invisibility, earthshaking tridents, divine bows, etc. -- and also poor Polyphemus, the shepherd whose neighbors think a fool and also the butt of the only satyr play we have left.

And while I like that D&D cribs from myth and legend, it has always done far better by jettisoning some of that baggage to make its own mythology. The progression of dragon legends --> chromatic vs. metallic dragons (& others) in D&D was cool. Cyclopskin showing up in a game, though, was just an excuse to make sheep jokes ("Why do cyclops kin wear kilts?" "Cause the sheep can hear zippers").

noisms

07-11-2008 11:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9105602)

Hmm. I was just thinking about what the old Cyclops empire would look like. The art would have one-eyed beings as significant elements. What other one-eyed beings do we know? Perhaps Gruumsh was either once a god of the Cyclops, or was a Cyclops himself when the orcs were a slave race.

So, imagine a world in which cyclops rule a mighty empire. Their intelligentsia learn the secrets of fantasy-style bioengineering and eugenics. Gradually, a rift begins to occur, as the intelligentsia modify themselves to become more and more powerful. They actually remove their own bodies, as unnecessary appendages, relying solely on their heads, the seat of their power. They add more and more eyes, and give those eyes greater and greater magical abilities. Eventually, a civil war erupts, and the empire falls.

Ten thousand years later, only a rare few scholars suspect that the cyclops and the beholders were once one people.

Nice. Very nice.

Sleeper

07-11-2008 11:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9105602)

Hmm. I was just thinking about what the old Cyclops empire would look like. The art would have one-eyed beings as

significant elements. What other one-eyed beings do we know? Perhaps Gruumsh was either once a god of the Cyclops, or was a Cyclops himself when the orcs were a slave race.

So, imagine a world in which cyclops rule a mighty empire. Their intelligentsia learn the secrets of fantasy-style bioengineering and eugenics. Gradually, a rift begins to occur, as the intelligentsia modify themselves to become more and more powerful. They actually remove their own bodies, as unnecessary appendages, relying solely on their heads, the seat of their power. They add more and more eyes, and give those eyes greater and greater magical abilities. Eventually, a civil war erupts, and the empire falls.

Ten thousand years later, only a rare few scholars suspect that the cyclops and the beholders were once one people.

They learned to forge eyes? Neat. All you need is something to explain why the beholders went bugfuck crazy. Divine retribution for hubris would be very in keeping with the original myths.

Lugh

07-11-2008 11:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9105687)

They learned to forge eyes? Neat. All you need is something to explain why the beholders went bugfuck crazy. Divine retribution for hubris would be very in keeping with the original myths.

What do you mean "went?" You pretty much have to be bugfuck crazy already to harvest other people's eyes, enchant them, and stick them on your own head.

And, I much prefer the explanation of "a sense of what they *could* do developed much faster than a sense of what they *should* do" to any kind of divine retribution. Essentially, you have an entire group that falls into the kind of sanity trap you seen in, say, Reanimator or Frankenstein.

Zartes

07-12-2008 12:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9103084)

That's an excellent point, actually...I'm ashamed I didn't realize it earlier.

I think I get so blinded by genre convention that I forget to ask for any kind of verisimilitude. What do fantasy zombie do? They lurk in crypts. What do modern zombies do? They spread like a plague. Why?

In keeping with the perpetual awesomeness of this thread, I'm now inspired to think, really think, about the ecology of undeath. Assuming it's not a new phenomenon in most fantasy worlds, the easy replicability and (apparently) unlimited energy of the undead should have radically altered (demi-)human society, but most people (myself included) play it like a pseudo-medieval kingdom that has apparently developed in a tiny, zombie-free bottle, and is perpetually surprised by the walking dead. In a low-magic world, I can keep my disbelief suspended, but places like

the Forgotten Realms really have no excuse.

Onward to verisimilitude.

Personally, in my pet fantasy campaign, Undead are kept in check by three factors: they're not easy to make, heroes kept to take exception to them and...

Anti-ghouls.

Ghouls crave the flesh of the dead, right? So, Anti-ghouls are ghouls that crave the flesh of the *undead*. The Department of Necromancy in my campaign's primary magical school keeps an antighoul called Nigel on hand for "waste disposal" purposes.

EDIT: of course, the dominant species in my campaign world is *gnomes*, so whether logic still applies to anything involved therein is a matter of opinion...

Setebos

07-12-2008 12:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9105473)
Okay, Giants, here we go, take a deep breath....

By far the most intriguing aspect of these ones is their ancient curse of fossilisation - which gradually transforms them into stone over the course of their lives. I love the idea of an entire race being condemned to the same fate, which none of them know how to solve.

God help me, but all I can think of is the Desert Giants, convinced that petrification is divine retribution for weakness of character, choosing their leaders by dance-off.

g026r

07-12-2008 12:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9105473)
By far the most intriguing aspect of these ones is their ancient curse of fossilisation - which gradually transforms them into stone over the course of their lives. I love the idea of an entire race being condemned to the same fate, which none of them know how to solve.

I see vast wind-swept deserts where it's said that the adventurous or mad who venture far enough out into them can find groupings of statues, worn and pitted by time and the sands, standing where no signs of any habitation can be found. The sages themselves are confused as to the source, for their tomes speak not of any tribes of men who lived before them in the great desert.

The desert giants know of their origin, but remain silent. The curse is their great shame, and they do not speak of it to outsiders. Instead, they hide their petrifying body parts beneath wound sheets and flowing robes until the day approaches when such further efforts at concealment would be futile. The giant then quietly says their last farewell to their family and loved ones, and begins their trek towards the heart of the great desert--there to find peace and death near what was once the heart of their long fallen and forgotten empire.

JRM

07-12-2008 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9101961)

I always thought, though, that ghouls made the most sense of any of the spawning undead -- at least there was some implication that they had to eat. All of the rest apparently need no sustenance, and can spawn endlessly with minimal effort... especially if they can get their claws on some NPCs (rather than PCs). And they have no natural predators to keep their population in check (other than PCs).

It is a wonder that Greyhawk wasn't overrun by sudden hordes of ghouls, wights, vampires, etc. The place should look like a zombie apocalypse movie, really.

Sorry for being late to the ghoulish party*, but I felt like sharing my solution to the undead spawning problem. Back in the 1st edition Monster Manual for Demons & Devils it says that the most powerful of the damned souls they collected were used to create intelligent undead, and these may eventually be 'promoted' into true fiends.

That means if uncle Albert comes back as a ghoul it isn't really Albert, it's the dead body of your uncle being occupied by some random evil dead person. The spirit occupying it might be able to use some of the memories in its decaying brain, which might explain how it knows exploitable facts about the body's friends & family. Alternatively, the ghouls that remember people are evil souls sent back from the abyss to reoccupy their own corpses, although I think that should mainly happen with vampires, and ghouls are made from weaker spirits that have lost most of the identity of their previous lives.

Anyhows, that means that the number of 'ghoul-worthy' souls is the limiting factor, and once they're all running around the prime material eating people they can't spawn any more ghouls. This may also explain why so many ghouls are locked up in tombs. If you kill a ghoul its demonic spirit may return in a different corpse, but if you lock a ghoul in a crypt it could stay trapped there for millenia.

*Hmm, a ghoul party. I can see that going two ways - (1) you do NOT want to know what's in the birthday cake, or (2) "vote for me, and I'll make cremation and burial illegal!"

JRM

07-12-2008 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Anaxamander (Post 9103531)

Perhaps ghouls eat other undead. That would work pretty well I think, at least for the lower ranks. (and maybe the

higher ranks don't want competition) Although you might end up with ghoulish farmers, i.e. ghouls who keep herds of zombies and feed them living beings to keep the herd size stable.

That reminds me of a tiny kingdom of the undead in my own campaign which never got used in play. The aristocracy are a handful of vampires, the middle class are ghouls and the peasants are skeletons who toil in the fields and fight as cannon fodder. The skeletons farm crops used to feed living humanoids who are raised in pits. These wretches used to be a mixture of races, but have been bred for so many generations that they've become deranged, animalistic creatures with little resemblance to people, fated to become food and animated skeletons. They are not animated as zombies... it'd be a waste of perfectly edible flesh.

The kingdom's biggest problem is that any 'livestock' that seemed intelligent or rebellious enough to pose a potential threat was the first to be eaten, and the herd is now so stunted and reduced in intelligence they make weak and stupid ghouls - and most ghouls are pretty stupid to begin with. As a result, the kingdom has decided they must mount raids to capture fresh stock from the lands of the living, both to turn into superior ghouls and to replenish their livestock's bloodlines.

And that's where the player characters come in! :eek:

Sleeper

07-12-2008 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9105773)

And, I much prefer the explanation of "a sense of what they could do developed much faster than a sense of what they should do" to any kind of divine retribution. Essentially, you have an entire group that falls into the kind of sanity trap you seen in, say, Reanimator or Frankenstein.

That gets into interesting territory. Reanimator and Frankenstein are cautionary tales, which are fundamentally predicated on the fear of change, specifically the fear of technology. Fear is inherently irrational, so while the stories can be powerful and gripping, they fundamentally deal with emotional issues. They're not rational explorations of how morality should be applied to new developments. Maybe the beholders aren't nuts. Maybe they have rationally considered the consequences and have willingly given up their own personal identities to evolve into a new, more limitless lifeform. They are organic AIs, brains downloaded into a giant lens and fluid matrix, and they continually augment their form by incorporating new AIs, new identities. They're the transhumanists of the fantasy world. The ordinary peasant considers them to be bugfuck insane not only because the physical process is disturbing (plucking eyes), but because those who join the collective lose their own sense of self, which is terrifying. Almost all those stories about beholders are lies, cautionary tales spread out of raw, naked, primal fear.

A Letter From Prague

07-12-2008 03:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9106379)

Fear is inherently irrational,

Being afraid of shit that hurts you is generally pretty rational...

Sleeper

07-12-2008 07:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by A Letter From Prague (Post 9106875)
Being afraid of shit that hurts you is generally pretty rational...

Rational implies reasoning. Fear is an instinctive emotional response.

6inTruder

07-12-2008 09:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9105473)
Cloud Giant

Cloud Giants live in small clans at the tops of mountains or on "magical cloud islands" which they mine for silver lining. (That's check number two for that gag....I wonder how many times it will appear over the course of the book: The evil ones raid the local areas and beat up the humanoids living there; the good ones like to trade.

If I ever get to run my Spelljammer Homebrew the PCs will encounter, as a trade planet in their home system, an air planet where Cloud Giants live on their wierd *little* floating islands.

Not much more too it, but I kinda liked the idea of Giants being the dominant life/civ on some other planet.

noisms

07-12-2008 11:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9107935)
If I ever get to run my Spelljammer Homebrew the PCs will encounter, as a trade planet in their home system, an air planet where Cloud Giants live on their wierd little floating islands.

Not much more too it, but I kinda liked the idea of Giants being the dominant life/civ on some other planet.

That would be fun. The Giants could be embroiled in the middle of a civil war between the good and the evil varieties - but the PCs wouldn't know straight off the bat which side was which.

David J Prokopetz

07-12-2008 02:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9106379)

Reanimator and Frankenstein are cautionary tales, which are fundamentally predicated on the fear of change, specifically the fear of technology. Fear is inherently irrational, so while the stories can be powerful and gripping, they fundamentally deal with emotional issues. They're not rational explorations of how morality should be applied to new developments.

Random pet peeve: that's a simplistic reading of *Frankenstein*, albeit a common one. It's more accurate to state that *Frankenstein* is about humankind's collective refusal to take responsibility for the consequences of the technologies it develops. The text is not at all subtle about this point - it hammers on it pretty hard on several occasions.

Naxuul

07-12-2008 02:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9108708)

Random pet peeve: that's a simplistic reading of Frankenstein, albeit a common one. It's more accurate to state that Frankenstein is about humankind's collective refusal to take responsibility for the consequences of the technologies it develops. The text is not at all subtle about this point - it hammers on it pretty hard on several occasions.

Yeah, Frankenstein doesn't make a monster because he raises the dead. He makes a monster because he raises the dead then runs scared shitless from it and all that entails.

-Naxuul

noisms

07-12-2008 02:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9108708)

Random pet peeve: that's a simplistic reading of Frankenstein, albeit a common one. It's more accurate to state that Frankenstein is about humankind's collective refusal to take responsibility for the consequences of the technologies it develops. The text is not at all subtle about this point - it hammers on it pretty hard on several occasions.

That's one of its themes, sure. But fear of change *is* another - hence *The Modern Prometheus*: be careful how far you go in the pursuit of technological advancement. (Because you might end up creating a monster - or, being chained to a rock and having your liver pecked out by a vulture every day.)

David J Prokopetz

07-12-2008 03:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9108788)

That's one of its themes, sure. But fear of change is another - hence The Modern Prometheus: be careful how far you go in the pursuit of technological advancement.

I have a problem with this reading because the monster is **not** a product of cutting-edge science. The text delves at some length into the fact that the Doctor is operating on the basis of outmoded principles more akin to alchemy than modern chemistry - he's a throwback to a more primitive and superstitious (or mystical, if you prefer) understanding of the universe.

As an aside, I've always felt that the subtitle is meant to be ironic, as the mythic Prometheus was made to suffer because he **refused** to abdicate his responsibility toward his creation (i.e., the human race). He's the precise opposite of the Doctor in this sense.

noisms

07-12-2008 04:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9108820)

*I have a problem with this reading because the monster is **not** a product of cutting-edge science. The text delves at some length into the fact that the Doctor is operating on the basis of outmoded principles more akin to alchemy than modern chemistry - he's a throwback to a more primitive and superstitious (or mystical, if you prefer) understanding of the universe.*

I'm not sure I agree with that reading. Shelley herself probably had a primitive and superstitious (i.e. mystical and Romantic) view of the universe; she apparently disliked Prometheus because she believed that the discovery of fire had brought about meat-eating in mankind. If I remember rightly the story was also partly inspired by Percy Shelley's experiments with electricity and magnetism - indicating that Shelley herself was suspicious of the new sciences.

Quote:

As an aside, I've always felt that the subtitle is meant to be ironic, as the mythic Prometheus was made to suffer because he **refused** to abdicate his responsibility toward his creation (i.e., the human race). He's the precise opposite of the Doctor in this sense.

See above: Prometheus irresponsibly created a monster (fire) in Shelley's eyes, which meant that humans could kill and eat animals. This is paralleled by Frankenstein, who irresponsibly created an actual monster.

Don't forget that *The Modern Prometheus* was a term coined by Immanuel Kant in reference (I think) to Ben Franklin and his electrical experiments. Shelley likely knew of the reference, and was referring to modern scientists in general.

(This is all half-remembered from my university Romanticism course, 8 years ago, so I might be mistaken.)

Crinos

07-12-2008 05:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Well when I read the story for a humanities class, we learned it as Frankenstein was playing God and doing a piss poor job at it was the general gist of the story. Course its kind of foggy at this point, it was a few years ago that I read it.

noisms

07-12-2008 05:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9109068)

Well when I read the story for a humanities class, we learned it as Frankenstein was playing God and doing a piss poor job at it was the general gist of the story. Course its kind of foggy at this point, it was a few years ago that I read it.

Well yeah, to cut a long story short. But then we'd be putting thousands of university literature lecturers out of a job.... ;)

Anyway, enough Frankenstein! On with the Giants! New entry coming up shortly.

Sleeper

07-12-2008 06:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9108708)

Random pet peeve: that's a simplistic reading of Frankenstein, albeit a common one. It's more accurate to state

that Frankenstein is about humankind's collective refusal to take responsibility for the consequences of the technologies it develops. The text is not at all subtle about this point - it hammers on it pretty hard on several occasions.

I don't entirely agree with your interpretation, but I wasn't trying for a balanced literary analysis of a classic novel either. I was just bringing up a theme that unites almost all science-runs-amok stories, and that it primarily appeals to the emotions, not the intellect. Frankenstein is a rather sophisticated piece of work that is far more subtle and nuanced than its descendants. Reanimator and its kind are what the original story has devolved into: Primarily just raw exploitation, built on a simplistic and almost mindless treatment of "science is bad".

But yes, on to the giants :).

kelvingreen

07-12-2008 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9108820)
The text delves at some length...

Also bear in mind that there are at least two texts, one from 1818 and a revised edition from 1831, and there are significant differences in tone between the two. The first is more ironic and satirical, as I recall.

DMH

07-12-2008 08:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9105605)
Splitting up the Cyclops and Cyclopskin (which reads like it's Cyclop-skin, doesn't it?) is probably an attempt to capture the dichotomy of Greek myth, where the cyclopes are both godlike crafters of Zeus' thunderbolts, helms of invisibility, earthshaking tridents, divine bows, etc. -- and also poor Polyphemus, the shepherd whose neighbors thin a fool and also the butt of the only satyr play we have left.

True cyclops were divided up in Legends and Lore into lesser (the version in the MM) and the greater (which has immunity to heat because of the work at the forge plus a bunch of other things that I can't remember at the moment).

Cyclopskin is like the verbeeg- a size change and not much else.

JRM

07-12-2008 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9105473)
Cloud Giant

Cloud Giants live in small clans at the tops of mountains or on "magical cloud islands" which they mine for silver lining. (That's check number two for that gag....I wonder how many times it will appear over the course of the book? The evil ones raid the local areas and beat up the humanoids living there; the good ones like to trade.

Maybe they're not different instances of the same gag - what if Cloud Giant's magical cloud islands are made from [tempests](#)?

David J Prokopetz

07-12-2008 11:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9108962)
I'm not sure I agree with that reading. Shelley herself probably had a primitive and superstitious (i.e. mystical and Romantic) view of the universe [...]

While I respect your request to leave the debate aside, I feel compelled to point out that this isn't quite what I meant. The text explicitly describes the Doctor as operating on the basis of outmoded principles - he's even upbraided by one of his more progressive colleagues at one point. I'm not slamming the novel for being written by someone with an imprecise understanding of contemporary science. :)

noisms

07-12-2008 11:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9109409)
Maybe they're not different instances of the same gag - what if Cloud Giant's magical cloud islands are made from tempests?

They'd make quite a pair of allies...

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109700)
They'd make quite a pair of allies...

That's not what I meant. The tempests would hardly stay allied once the cloud giants started mining them for silver.

noisms

07-13-2008 12:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Giant, E-F

Ettin

If Cloud Giants are the Elves of Giantkind, Ettins are the Ogres - mean, dirty, brutish, two-headed things that like to squish stuff. There isn't a great deal more to say about them, except for two things:

- Ettins are so dirty that their lairs are a haven for parasites and vermin. Adventurers rooting around in them could easily find themselves picking up diseases or having to deal with a new, secondary set of enemies (rats and giant insects would be fun).

- There is a hint that Ettins hoard treasure in order to pay orcs and goblins as mercenaries. There's only a short leap from there to imagine an Ettin warlord gradually gathering power and taking on the world of men with his (their?) almighty horde...

Firbolg

These are big, beardy, Grizzly-Adams types who live in forests and mountains and keep themselves to themselves. They're the only kind of giants who I genuinely have difficulty getting excited about; their entry is one of the few in the MM to offer essentially nothing in the way of hooks. If you think differently, by all means get your creative gears whirring and come up with something.

Fire

An old favourite, Fire Giants are, as well as being really cool, an interesting insight into the differences between the editions. The 2nd edition picture makes the creature look like an oversized dwarf in plate mail armour, whose only real relation to fire is that he has a reddish beard. Compare that with the Fire Giant pictures in 3rd and 4th edition and you'll see essentially a completely different beast; back in the day there really was something more...low key...about the artwork where everything now is overblown.

I like how the Fire Giants carry around a sack, and how its contents are detailed. All of them contain, naturally enough, a tinderbox.

Fire Giants rule an area of my long-running campaign world. It's a mountainous, volcanic zone, rather like Yellowstone Park but covering a much wider and more arid area. They are the upper caste in a strictly stratified hierarchy of races, with Duergar, Hobgoblins and Goblins below them. There's something very appealing about Giantish rulers - it reminds

me of *The Silver Chair* or, even better, Gene Wolfe's *The Wizard Knight*. Huge castles and fortresses hundreds of times bigger than those used by humans, with staircases you have to climb up and massive oak doors towering above you. The imagery gets even better if you imagine a backdrop of steaming geysers and volcanoes oozing magma.

noisms

07-13-2008 12:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9109791)

That's not what I meant. The tempests would hardly stay allied once the cloud giants started mining them for silver.

In that case, I suppose you could conceive of Tempests being captured and enslaved by the Cloud Giants. The Tempests would be kept in a permanent debased state but prevented from dying, because then their silver supply would run out. The Cloud Giants want to keep them alive forever as a perpetual source of the metal.

kelvingreen

07-13-2008 01:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109797)

If Cloud Giants are the Elves of Giantkind

Speaking of which, we're soon going to get to that awful forest giant picture...

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109797)

Firbolg

These are big, beardy, Grizzly-Adams types who live in forests and mountains and keep themselves to themselves. They're the only kind of giants who I genuinely have difficulty getting excited about; their entry is one of the few in the MM to offer essentially nothing in the way of hooks. If you think differently, by all means get your creative gears whirring and come up with something.

It's a case where they took a name from folklore/mythology/legend, left the rest behind, and didn't replace it with anything better. If they weren't going to bring the Fir Bolg intact from mythology, they should have just had it as an alternate name for another kind of giant, rather than the generic nothingness we actually got. At least Fomorians did a bit better, although their chief Balor unfortunately didn't make it, for obvious reasons.

You know, with the rubbish forest giant picture and the general unimaginativeness of the rest (desert giant and Fomorians aside), the Giant section of the *MM* is a bit of a let-down.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109797)

back in the day there really was something more...low key...about the artwork where everything now is overblown.

Overblown in a different way, I think. There was some truly mental stuff in the early days, which calmed down by the time 2e came about, and now we've got a case where the artwork is really rather conventional, but everything's been Turned Up To 11.

JRM

07-13-2008 03:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109804)

In that case, I suppose you could conceive of Tempests being captured and enslaved by the Cloud Giants. The Tempests would be kept in a permanent debased state but prevented from dying, because then their silver supply would run out. The Cloud Giants want to keep them alive forever as a perpetual source of the metal.

Yup, that's more what I was thinking, with a family of evil cloud giants building their castle atop a black cloud formed from the shackled bodies of numerous Tempests. Can't see the good cloud giants doing the same - although they may hunt tempests through the sky, to collect their silver.

Now I'm imagining a cloud giant with a wooden leg and an eye patch, captaining a flying ship on his obsessive quest to hunt down the Great White Tempest.

Sleeper

07-13-2008 04:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Speaking of overblown, it might be interesting to combine the fire giants with the dwarves of Norse mythology. They're the great smiths, forging adamantite and mithral into powerful armor and weapons like hammers of thunderbolts and vorpal swords. Their name comes from their fiery nature, and their resistance to heat comes from generations of slaving at the forge. Except, that's not all. The elder generation of fire giants guards a forbidding secret: They *were* the dwarves of Norse of mythology. An age ago, they fled Jotunheim, where they were the smallest of the small, and came to Midgard where even their diminutive stature made them seem like giants to the puny humans. The PCs could be sent on a quest to find one of the mad forefathers of the race, to inveigle and beguile him into forging an artifact worthy of the gods. To craft impossibly hard metals, jewels, chains of thought, and half-baked dreams into gossamer chariots of ethereal beauty, living swine made of gold, or axes that can cleave mountains. And across the Nine Worlds, sent to stop them, is a cadre of true giants three times the height of the so-called giants of the middle realm.

6inTruder

07-13-2008 04:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9108347)

That would be fun. The Giants could be embroiled in the middle of a civil war between the good and the evil varieties - but the PCs wouldn't know straight off the bat which side was which.

Hey! ... That's a great idea! :o

demiurge1138

07-13-2008 07:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9109797)

If Cloud Giants are the Elves of Giantkind, Ettins are the Ogres.

I was under the impression that *ogres* were the ogres of giant-kind...

Sleeper

07-13-2008 09:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9111016)

I was under the impression that ogres were the ogres of giant-kind...

No, ogres are the *halflings* of giant-kind. Small, puny, and you can't leave them alone with your good silverware.

Sleeper

07-13-2008 09:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9111295)

No, ogres are the halflings of giant-kind. Small, puny, and you can't leave them alone with your good silverware.

To riff on that, then what are *halflings* to giants? Well, they're rats. And like rats, they're everywhere -- even if the giants don't always see them. They're in the baseboards and the trees, they burrow under the foundations, and dart across the open spaces. Eating scraps, gnawing holes in barrels, feasting on the cereals. The halflings

in this world are half-feral, twitchy and scampering. Rat-like in demeanor if not appearance. Occasionally one gets stomped by an annoyed giant, and once in a while an incautious whelp gets caught in a trap or nibbles on some poisoned peanut butter. But not very often.

To giant-hunters, halflings can be a good source of information. But they're furtive and hard to catch, and very reluctant. They don't trust the the semi-big ones, like humans and elves, who are just too small to easily hide from. And while they don't necessarily like or trust the giants, they live on their leavings and don't want to hurt their food source. The party's best bet may be a distraught halfling widow, whose husband was pulped and children were poisoned. In her grief, she doesn't care about the rest of her clan. She just wants the giants smashed. So from the shadow of her hole in the base of the wall, she tattles to the adventurers in a squeaky whisper.

ogier300

07-13-2008 12:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Given all the debate about *Frankenstein*, I can't wait for the Flesh Golem entry now...

demiurge1138

07-13-2008 05:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9111349)

To riff on that, then what are halflings to giants? Well, they're rats. And like rats, they're everywhere -- even if the giants don't always see them. They're in the baseboards and the trees, they burrow under the foundations, and dart across the open spaces. Eating scraps, gnawing holes in barrels, feasting on the cereals. The halflings in this world are half-feral, twitchy and scampering. Rat-like in demeanor if not appearance. Occasionally one gets stomped by an annoyed giant, and once in a while an incautious whelp gets caught in a trap or nibbles on some poisoned peanut butter. But not very often.

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These shouldn't be halflings. These should be *gnomes*.

Gnomes and giants already don't get along--gnomes get mad plusses to avoid being attacked by giant-type creatures. Because they make a good living in the shadow of giants, raiding their cupboards, nicking the occasional goose with golden eggs, and generally making a nuisance of themselves. Plus, while halflings are generally friendly and pastoral folk, gnomes keep their secrets to themselves, being generally, well, gnomic among outsiders.

Sleeper

07-13-2008 07:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9112388)
These shouldn't be halflings. These should be gnomes.

Nice. The "scurry, scurry don't squash me" bonus to AC isn't some fancy trained combat technique. Wee gnomelings dare each other to dart in front of giantish sentinels, and over the years they just become very, very good at not being stepped on. The whack-a-kobold or -goblin bonus is because those two races are their main competitors for living space under the straw and in the hollows between walls; like rats, gnomes are vicious when cornered and threatened in their homes. The kobolds are the black rats, notorious plague vectors who spread across the world by stowing away on ships, and are now being displaced by the brown rat (gnome). The gnomish talent for illusion is a natural survival skill: Blurred or invisible, false scuttling sounds in the baseboards, and multiplying gnome-rats (using *mirror image*) when startled by a giant who opens a cupboard. Like rats, they're everywhere but rarely seen.

The hill giant infestations would be the best known, whole clans and warrens hidden within and under their vast steadings. Only a few hardy varieties would infest the volcanic homes of the fire giants, a rather inhospitable environment. Swarms of heavily-furr(coated)ed gnomes infest the glacial rifts. Like brown rats who rarely stray far, many gnomes would live their entire lives within the rift of a single giant jarl. Totally unsuited for crossing the icy wastes, the occasional young band would hitch a ride in pouches or in great wagons across the tundra when the population grows to large to sustain them, and spread in that fashion. Family groups would also hide in the cloud giants' elegant halls of stone and vapor, and the storm giants' rough and ready stockades formed of lashed-together trunks of giant firs. The giants might hire adventurers, particularly the quarter-sized ones like dwarves and halflings, to clear out the larger nests. Kill them, or persuade them to pack up and migrate *en masse*?

DMH

07-13-2008 08:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

The Role-aids book on giants added one of the most bizzare animals- a rodent that can be squashed flat and survive. Some of the stupider giants use them as clothing (!?) so the "hide" on a hill giant may actually move and squirm.

Quote:

- Ettins are so dirty that their lairs are a haven for parasites and vermin. Adventurers rooting around in them could easily find themselves picking up diseases or having to deal with a new, secondary set of enemies (rats and giant insects would be fun).

Now what would make them immune to rot grubs?

JRM

07-13-2008 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9112627)

Nice. The "scurry, scurry don't squash me" bonus to AC isn't some fancy trained combat technique. Wee gnomelings dare each other to dart in front of giantish sentinels, and over the years they just become very, very good at not being stepped on. The whack-a-kobold or -goblin bonus is because those two races are their main competitors for living space under the straw and in the hollows between walls; like rats, gnomes are vicious when cornered and threatened in their homes. The kobolds are the black rats, notorious plague vectors who spread across the world by stowing away on ships, and are now being displaced by the brown rat (gnome). The gnomish talent for illusion is a natural survival skill: Blurred or invisible, false scuttling sounds in the baseboards, and multiplying gnome-rats (using mirror image) when startled by a giant who opens a cupboard. Like rats, they're everywhere but rarely seen.

The hill giant infestations would be the best known, whole clans and warrens hidden within and under their vast steadings. Only a few hardy varieties would infest the volcanic homes of the fire giants, a rather inhospitable environment. Swarms of heavily-furr(coated)ed gnomes infest the glacial rifts. Like brown rats who rarely stray far, many gnomes would live their entire lives within the rift of a single giant jarl. Totally unsuited for crossing the icy wastes, the occasional young band would hitch a ride in pouches or in great wagons across the tundra when the population grows to large to sustain them, and spread in that fashion. Family groups would also hide in the cloud giants' elegant halls of stone and vapor, and the storm giants' rough and ready stockades formed of lashed-together trunks of giant firs. The giants might hire adventurers, particularly the quarter-sized ones like dwarves and halflings, to clear out the larger nests. Kill them, or persuade them to pack up and migrate en masse?

Some nice ideas here, having gnomes living like rats in giant's steadings. Doesn't fit with their habitat/ecology in the Monstrous Manual, but it'd be easy enough to stat up another subrace for these 'Borrower Gnomes'. I'm thinking they'd likely be 2-2½ feet tall like forest gnomes, but would have special abilities more like rock gnomes and be more likely to learn the language of their giant hosts rather than dwarf or elf, for obvious reasons.

Once upon a time I ran an adventure in a giant city whose citizens kept numerous dwarf and goblin slaves who were forced to move about via the gutters rather than at street level like the 'proper sized' people did. Have some of them escape and turn scavenger and bingo, you've got gutter goblins.

As for giants hiring adventures to clear out gnome nests, that doesn't sound like something any good party would do. I'm thinking more of a party trying to persuade a gnome nest to help them steal a macguffin from the bedchamber of the giant king, and have to deal with paranoid gnomes, a kobold tribe of rival scavengers, a 'gnome-catcher' hill giant with his pet giant weasels and maybe a few underfloor/sewer monsters.

Sleeper

07-13-2008 10:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9112748)

Doesn't fit with their habitat/ecology in the Monstrous Manual, but it'd be easy enough to stat up another subrace for these 'Borrower Gnomes'.

That's a perfectly fine interpretation and might be fun, but it's very far away from my intent. I wasn't thinking of a new gnome subrace. I was thinking of making gnomes -- all gnomes in the world --different. Just adding another bizarre subrace doesn't have that impact. Nobody can keep track of the absurd number of humanoids,

anyway. And they're not borrowers. These gnomes are inspired by *Rattus rattus*, *R. norvegicus*, and invasive species; not a candy-coated kids story.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9112748)

As for giants hiring adventures to clear out gnome nests, that doesn't sound like something any good party would do.

Why not? They're dirty little rat-like parasites who live in the wainscoting of the homes of other races. They peep, they spy, they steal food, they might even poison the most annoying little-big brats. And giants don't have to be cartoonishly malevolent. They might have a brutish warlike culture (hill, frost, and storm giants at least), but many barbarian tribes were considered valuable trading partners by Rome, and serving as mercenaries was commonplace. And if hill giants are big peasants, an infestation spoiling all the wheat in a granary would threaten the survival of the entire community. Having absolute alignments and races who are evil for the sake of being evil is fine, but I like the occasional touch of moral complexity. Could even add a *Warhammer*-inspired gnome-catcher kit, who start with 1d3 gnome pelts on a stick.

JRM

07-13-2008 11:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9112818)

*That's a perfectly fine interpretation and might be fun, but it's very far away from my intent. I wasn't thinking of a new gnome subrace. I was thinking of making gnomes -- all gnomes in the world -- different. Just adding another bizarre subrace doesn't have that impact. Nobody can keep track of the absurd number of humanoids, anyway. And they're not borrowers. These gnomes are inspired by *Rattus rattus*, *R. norvegicus*, and invasive species; not a candy-coated kids story.*

Well on Krynn all the gnomes seem to be tinker gnomes, who are considered a subrace in the Monstrous Manual. It depends how different you want them to be - they could just be a cultural variant of regular rock or forest gnomes, maybe a little smaller and twitchier, but if you want them to be verminous parasites in giant house that looks as big a gap from the 'regular' gnome as the other MM gnome subraces.

The borrowers were thieving little vermin too, they just didn't see themselves that way. I doubt your proposed gnomes would boast of being 'rat gnomes' or 'household vermin', wouldn't they'd think of themselves as being 'steading gnomes' or something like that.

As for the alignment issue, I just fell back on the AD&D defaults of most gnomes being good and a lot of giants being evil.

noisms

07-13-2008 11:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Giant, F

Fog Giant

These are one of the casualties (I think) of the transfer from 2nd to 3rd edition - I'm not so well versed in the multitudinous 3rd edition Monster Manuals, but I don't think Fog Giants ever made an appearance. This is a shame, because Fog Giants are a lot of fun - hunting White Dragons, ganging together with Cloud Giants to cause mischief, playing *copsi* (boulder-tossing) and bartering for silver. Young Fog Giants have to collect a large item of pure silver before they can mate, and often undergo quests for it, which sounds like something adventurers would get caught up in. Best of all, Fog Giants like to eat Centaurs - which long-term readers will know that I appreciate very much.

I believe Fog Giants are based on Giants of a particular real-life culture, but I'm not sure which.

Fomorian

Fomorians are a bastardised version of the Fomorians of Irish myth, in which respect they are similar to the Fir Bolg, except a little more interesting. I suppose a workable path for a campaign to go down would be a war between Fomorians and Fir Bolg, set in a Celtic-based area, with the players having to choose sides between the two.

Fomorians are mutated, deformed horrors whose society is "ruled by depravity and wickedness". The picture looks like Quasimodo, although my understanding is that the Fomorians of legend were man-goats. I'm not sure where the D&D people got the idea to turn them into hunchbacks.

Fomorians like the meat of large animals "who beg not to be eaten". Their cooking consists of torture, rather than measures to improve taste. Ulp.

Frost Giant

Frost Giants are like huge, malicious vikings - big blokes with horned helmets and two-handed axes. They love burying themselves in the snow, and then leaping out shouting "I'm a Frost Giant!!" before lopping off your head.

In my long-running campaign world there is a mercenary company of Frost Giants moving inexorably across a continent, rather like Alexander the Great and his armies. Nobody knows where they are going and they probably don't know themselves. They are just traveling ever onwards, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.

Sleeper

07-14-2008 12:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Despite a few superficial similarities, the Borrowers (and gully dwarves for that matter) would be vastly different in terms of themes, imagery, and culture. But that's just fine, too. Easier to incorporate into a one-shot, too, if they're just an obscure aberrant offshoot.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9112935)

As for the alignment issue, I just fell back on the AD&D defaults of most gnomes being good and a lot of giants being evil.

Well, doesn't have to be a good party, either. 2E definitely had a strong focus on the Good with a capital G party and their Evil with a capital E opponents, but oD&D and 1E definitely had a morally ambiguous sword & sorcery vibe. There was good, and there was evil, but mercenary behavior and using hirelings as cannon fodder was common, and there were assassin PCs. Wicked was viable, and expedience was the norm.

Sleeper

07-14-2008 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9113010)
Fog Giant

These are one of the casualties (I think) of the transfer from 2nd to 3rd edition - I'm not so well versed in the multitudinous 3rd edition Monster Manuals, but I don't think Fog Giants ever made an appearance.

They apparently were hidden away in a setting-specific bestiary, the *Monsters of Faerûn*. Image [here](#).

JRM

07-14-2008 12:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9113030)
Well, doesn't have to be a good party, either. 2E definitely had a strong focus on the Good with a capital G party and their Evil with a capital E opponents, but oD&D and 1E definitely had a morally ambiguous sword & sorcery vibe. There was good, and there was evil, but mercenary behavior and using hirelings as cannon fodder was common, and there were assassin PCs. Wicked was viable, and expedience was the norm.

Erm, that's why I said it didn't seem like a job a good (or should that be Good?) party would accept. An Evil or Mercenary-Neutral party, no problem. My first impression was the giants were looking to hire mercenaries to kill a bunch of sapient beings because they steal some of the giants' food in order to survive. That's doesn't seem a terribly moral act. It'd be like some AD&D humans deciding to get the ratcatcher to kill all the jermlaines or house-brownies in their kitchen, or execute the goblin beggars scavenging in their rubbish heap. Your other proposal of relocating the 'steading gnomes' would be a more moral solution, if the party could find a way to make it sustainable.

If I was a PC in such a scenario I'd probably try to persuade the two parties to form a more symbiotic relationship - I'm sure there'd be all kinds of work the gnomes could perform for the giants in return for their keep. (keeping down vermin, precision tasks that are awkward for giant fingers etc)

demiurge1138

07-14-2008 12:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9113060)
They apparently were hidden away in a setting-specific bestiary, the Monsters of Faerûn. Image here.

Monsters of Faerun stole a bunch of monsters that should've been core, or at least not setting-specific, like bullywugs, deepspawn and leucrotta.

JRM

07-14-2008 01:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9113010)

Fomorians are mutated, deformed horrors whose society is "ruled by depravity and wickedness". The picture looks like Quasimodo, although my understanding is that the Fomorians of legend were man-goats. I'm not sure where the D&D people got the idea to turn them into hunchbacks.

Fomorians like the meat of large animals "who beg not to be eaten". Their cooking consists of torture, rather than measures to improve taste. Ulp.

AD&D fomorian giants have loved torture since their first appearance in Gygax's The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth. It reminds me of 2000 AD's Slainé comics, doesn't it have fomorians who are horrible sea demons that delight in suffering, drinking the tears of mortals. Maybe AD&D fomorian giants literally enjoy the taste of pain and fear, that would explain why their cooking consists of torture.

[had to edit the first line of the previous paragraph since I mucked around with it so much in the original version I ruined the sense of it.]

The Irish sources do seem very mixed up as to what they were like - one was handsome enough to make desirable husbands for Tuatha de Danaan, one was a huge ghastly monster with a death-ray eye (the "not a type VI demon" Balor), some were one-eyed one-armed one-legged monsters resembling Fachan with curse-inflicting powers. It does make things confusing, eh.

Sleeper

07-14-2008 02:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9113108)

Erm, that's why I said it didn't seem like a job a good (or should that be Good?) party would accept.

That's why I proposed another option, when you didn't agree :). I'm not at all interested in getting into a discussion about alignment. Personal moral codes always seem to get mixed up with the fiction, and that never ends well.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9113117)

Monsters of Faerun stole a bunch of monsters that should've been core, or at least not setting-specific, like bullywugs, deepspawn and leucrotta.

And the wemic! Can't forget the bizarre liontaurs. That's reason alone for noisms to get ahold of a copy. :)

JRM

07-14-2008 03:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9113331)

That's why I proposed another option, when you didn't agree :). I'm not at all interested in getting into a discussion about alignment. Personal moral codes always seem to get mixed up with the fiction, and that never ends well.

And the wemic! Can't forget the bizarre liontaurs. That's reason alone for noisms to get ahold of a copy. :)

That's fine, I don't want to start a D&D alignment debate either, those never end well!:))

Monsters of Faerun is one of the few softback WotC books in my 3rd edition collection. It's thin for the cover price but there's some quality beasts in it.

kelvingreen

07-14-2008 03:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9113203)

*It reminds me of 2000 AD's *Slainé* comics, doesn't it have fomorians who are horrible sea demons that delight in suffering, drinking the tears of mortals...*

I can't remember if those were the actual Fomorians, or if they were allied demons.

Hang on...

It's a bit ambiguous. The opposing (humanoid, vaguely orcish) armies in *The Horned God* are called "Fomorians", "Sea Demons" and just plain "Demons" at various points. The weird tear-drinking man-beasts in their flying longship are simply called "Demons".

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9113203)

...one was a huge ghastly monster with a death-ray eye (the "not a type VI demon" Balor)

This Balor also makes it into *Sláine*, and it would have been great to have seen him as a unique Fomorian NPC in *D&D* too, but I suspect the name made that an impossibility.

Crinos

07-14-2008 05:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9113537)

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Hang on...

It's a bit ambiguous. The opposing (humanoid, vaguely orcish) armies in The Horned God are called "Fomorians", "Sea Demons" and just plain "Demons" at various points. The weird tear-drinking man-beasts in their flying longship are simply called "Demons".

This Balor also makes it into Sláine, and it would have been great to have seen him as a unique Fomorian NPC in D&D too, but I suspect the name made that an impossibility.

I think he was stattd out (or at least described) In the celtic adventures book.

It was one of those green softcover books for playing in actual historical settings. My older brother had that one and the Ancient Greece one.

JRM

07-14-2008 06:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9113537)

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Hang on...

It's a bit ambiguous. The opposing (humanoid, vaguely orcish) armies in The Horned God are called "Fomorians", "Sea Demons" and just plain "Demons" at various points. The weird tear-drinking man-beasts in their flying longship are simply called "Demons".

Yup, I couldn't remember for sure what kinds of demons in Slainé liked tear drinking, but I'm pretty sure it included the Fomorians who had invaded Ireland, although the "just plain 'demons'" may have been some kind of El-world creatures that weren't Fomorians.

To make matters worse, the more recent Slainé books introduced another kind of Fomorian Sea Demons who are fish-like monsters that parasitically latched onto human hosts.

Kakita Kojiro

07-14-2008 11:50 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9113010)
Fog Giant

These are one of the casualties (I think) of the transfer from 2nd to 3rd edition - I'm not so well versed in the multitudinous 3rd edition Monster Manuals, but I don't think Fog Giants ever made an appearance. This is a shame, because Fog Giants are a lot of fun - hunting White Dragons, ganging together with Cloud Giants to cause mischief, playing copsi (boulder-tossing) and bartering for silver. Young Fog Giants have to collect a large item of pure silver before they can mate, and often undergo quests for it, which sounds like something adventurers would get caught up in. Best of all, Fog Giants like to eat Centaurs - which long-term readers will know that I appreciate very much.

I believe Fog Giants are based on Giants of a particular real-life culture, but I'm not sure which.

So. Fog giants pal around with cloud giants. Fog giants undertake quests for silver so they can get laid. Cloud giants *mine* silver from their clouds. (that might be Tempests.) It'll be interesting to see how far they can play this plot-hook chain out...

Wakboth

07-14-2008 04:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

For whatever reason, I don't remember using giants very much in any game I've run. Maybe it was just the amount of entries and the fine-grained separation between the varieties; "this is a cloud giant, this is a fog giant; this is a mountain giant, this is a hill giant and this is a stone giant".

JasonK

07-14-2008 05:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9115368)

For whatever reason, I don't remember using giants very much in any game I've run. Maybe it was just the amount of entries and the fine-grained separation between the varieties; "this is a cloud giant, this is a fog giant; this is a mountain giant, this is a hill giant and this is a stone giant".

I'm with you on the lack of giant usage, but for me I think it's more conceptual. As I imagine a character fighting most giants, I can't picture that character reaching more than a leg, and a bunch of characters slashing at a giant's legs to kill it just isn't very appealing to me.

Maybe if giants were only 10 or 12 feet tall, max, I wouldn't have this problem? Or if I played through/saw a

few battles with giants involving highly uneven ground? Where, say, characters had to climb up on boulders/ledges/whatever to effectively hit the giants? I dunno.

~ jason

Sleeper

07-14-2008 08:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9115387)

I'm with you on the lack of giant usage, but for me I think it's more conceptual. As I imagine a character fighting most giants, I can't picture that character reaching more than a leg, and a bunch of characters slashing at a giant's legs to kill it just isn't very appealing to me.

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Or the highly cinematic running up the giant's club to plunge a sword between its ribs? Or the vicious but eminently practical hamstringing it, then slit its throat while it's laying in the dirt? What about the tarrasque? Treants? Krakens? Purple worms? Dragons? I tend to think the cinematic approach is the only one that really works in a world of giants.

I always had the same problem with halflings. They're not supposed to be supernaturally powerful for their size, like redcaps; they're essentially little humans, the size of toddlers.

Setebos

07-14-2008 09:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9115368)

For whatever reason, I don't remember using giants very much in any game I've run. Maybe it was just the amount of entries and the fine-grained separation between the varieties; "this is a cloud giant, this is a fog giant; this is a mountain giant, this is a hill giant and this is a stone giant".

I know what you mean. Unless playing in a world inspired by Norse myth, I rarely used giants at all. For me, it was:

(a) For most purposes, the giants were just different shades of very large people, and since I wasn't particularly intrigued by their largeness per se, I could just as well use a kingdom of cloudhumans, and at least let the PC's use stairs (and doors) (and bathtubs) (and windows).

(b) Along the same lines as your second point, I didn't find the giant categorization and naming convention (taxonomy? Is that the word?) very creatively fertile, either. "Thing+giant" = new species! Thing? Cloud! Thing? Desert! Man, we're great at this!

In fact, they should have realized the rut they were falling into and run headlong into it; maybe make giants into animist avatars for associated objects/areas. Make them part of druidic myth; as dryads are to trees, a family/clan of fire giants are to a volcano.

noisms

07-14-2008 10:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9115917)

In fact, they should have realized the rut they were falling into and run headlong into it; maybe make giants into animist avatars for associated objects/areas. Make them part of druidic myth; as dryads are to trees, a family/clan of fire giants are to a volcano.

That's actually a very nice idea. It even works for Fog Giants - a race of beings who are literally *fog made real*, and who dissipate with the mist only to reform the next morning (or whenever).

I get what you mean about the Noun + Giant naming convention. I'd quite like more esoteric and unusual variants: Cactus Giants who stand motionless in the desert waiting for rain; Reed Giants who prey on travelers through a vast marshland; Coral Giants who slumber in shallow tropical seas and whose bodies are homes for thousands of fish...who rouse themselves only when their hunger compels them to destroy a passing ship and feed on the drowning sailors.

Sleeper

07-14-2008 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

I like that. There isn't enough traditional spiritualism in most generic fantasy. The giantkin or not-quite-true giants could be domestic spirits. Ettins could be symbolic of familial strife. Fight with your sister too many times, and an ettin appears with your heads and lashes out at whatever spurred your anger. Ogres might be symbolic of teenage rebellion and angst; the moody outsider would have a large ugly shadow that appears whenever she's being bullied or picked on, and smashes. Could even be a sign of untrained talent at wizardry; magical talent scouts would hunt down rumors of bestial giants, and try to rescue their unknowing creators before the enraged villagers burn them as witches.

Setebos

07-15-2008 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9116218)

I like that. There isn't enough traditional spiritualism in most generic fantasy. The giantkin or not-quite-true giants could be domestic spirits. Ettins could be symbolic of familial strife. Fight with your sister too many times, and an ettin appears with your heads and lashes out at whatever spurred your anger. Ogres might be symbolic of teenage rebellion and angst; the moody outsider would have a large ugly shadow that appears whenever she's being bullied or picked on, and smashes. Could even be a sign of untrained talent at wizardry; magical talent scouts would hunt down rumors of bestial giants, and try to rescue their unknowing creators before the enraged villagers burn them as

witches.

Perhaps this would help to explain why the larger, "true" giants also look like people, because unquestioned anthropocentrism kind of bugs me. Do the nature giants, as ontologically independent creatures, take on humanoid form in order to interact with humanoids, or are they *also* creations of the subconscious, perhaps so much larger because they are a collective dream rather than an individual one?

I like the latter, at first...then I realize that it could get us into "Clap your hands if you believe" territory :mad:

Noisms

07-15-2008 02:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9115387)

I'm with you on the lack of giant usage, but for me I think it's more conceptual. As I imagine a character fighting most giants, I can't picture that character reaching more than a leg, and a bunch of characters slashing at a giant's legs to kill it just isn't very appealing to me.

I have that problem too - although for me the bigger issue is, if a 20' tall bloke was swinging a tree-trunk club at you, one hit would be enough to turn you into a big splat no matter who you are. How do you envisage a 'glancing blow' from a tree trunk? And what earthly use would armour be against such a weapon? "I protect myself from the tree trunk swinging at my head by raising my shield!"

(I know hit points are abstract, so it isn't strictly necessary to imagine lost hit points in a Giant fight being from actual 'hits'. But still.)

The Complete Book of Rangers, of course, had a Giantkiller kit. I always liked the illustration, which was a man with a massive spear, more like an awl-pike, which he was using to try to bring down an unidentified Giant.

ShannonA

07-15-2008 03:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual

Locked due to size.

Here's the new thread:

<http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=404795>

Please read on to continue the discussion.

JasonK

07-15-2008 04:55 AM

[Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

EDIT: This thread is a continuation of Noisms' epic attempt to read/review the entirety of the 2nd Edition Monstrous

Manual. [Here's the thread](#) where he got started. As you can see, much discussion and many campaign ideas came out of it and all involved had a rockin' good time.

Anyway, I'm not noisms, but I'm continuing this myself 'cause I don't want to leave off discussion of giants just yet. :)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper

Or the highly cinematic running up the giant's club to plunge a sword between its ribs? Or the vicious but eminently practical hamstringing it, then slit its throat while it's laying in the dirt? What about the tarrasque? Treants? Krakens? Purple worms? Dragons? I tend to think the cinematic approach is the only one that really works in a world of giants

I agree in theory, but for some reason my head doesn't want to make it happen in practice. Run up the club? Mmm... no. Doesn't work for me, in a D&D game. Dunno why. The larger, wyrmy monsters (dragons, tarrasques, purple worms) I see heroes ducking past claws to stab at their chests or slashing at the throat/head as the beast comes in for a bite. I don't think of treants as having legs, so a cut to the trunk is fine no matter how big they are... Krakens you never really kill - just do enough damage to their flailing tentacles so that they sink into the depths again.

I'm well aware that this is all a stupid, illogical, nonsense distinction here. It's a dumb perception to hold onto. But I can't seem to let it go. And that bothers me because I actually really *like* giants. Especially frost giants. It's the love of Norse myth that sits in my heart.

I guess I'll just have to settle, in my head, for giants that are never more than 12 feet tall. :)

~ jason

g026r

07-15-2008 05:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

You forgot the link to the first thread though. ;)

<http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=389945>

Sleeper

07-15-2008 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9116897)

I'm well aware that this is all a stupid, illogical, nonsense distinction here. It's a dumb perception to hold onto. But I can't seem to let it go. And that bothers me because I actually really likegiants. Especially frost giants. It's the love of Norse myth that sits in my heart.

I guess I'll just have to settle, in my head, for giants that are never more than 12 feet tall. :)

I almost kind of agree, but dragons are actually much worse. Even assuming giants are disproportionately

strong and dragons don't have the edge most animals have over puny humans (compare adult chimpanzee and human lifting strength), the giant faux-lizards still have armor, nasty talons, deadly teeth, and all kinds of other adaptations. Sounds like the big issue is opportunity attacks: The worst a hero'll do against a giant with a 20 ft. club is force him to uproot another tree because the champion broke his old one; while a dragon clawing or biting would get slashed in the forelimbs or face. If that was actually the case however, dragons would have long ago learned to keep their heads high and to use their claws to throw loose boulders at their attackers, instead of risking death. Or just do the drive-by breathing thing.

Combat in D&D is a strange mix of the very abstract and the fairly specific. Hit points are so amorphous it's really hard to pin down exactly what they represent, armor class is a mix of tin plates and dodging, and even the length of a round and the number of attacks have an abstract element. On the other hand, there are rules for death by massive damage (which kind of defeats the purpose of hit points), a detailed subsystem for aerial combat, and a specific note that a thief needs to be able to get near a giant's vitals to backstab. To really do justice to creatures of different sizes would require a massive rewrite of the combat system, incorporating not only reach and hit locations, but the fog of combat, fatigue, morale, and the dynamic ebb and flow of a mass melee. Because a real fight is about a lot of chaotic action and counteraction, and taking advantage of any opportunities. Not just standing in place and swinging once every 60 seconds (miniatures tend to create the impression it's more static than it really should be).

I think in a lot of ways, hit points have to be regarded as a war of attrition. Over time, the dragon strains a muscle from overextending itself, gets a claw severed, gets stabbed in the pink of the belly, and finally begins to stagger from fatigue and lose track of all the darting humans, until one jumps up at the right time and thrusts under a scale and through its heart. It only takes one real hit. The same applies to giants. A melee might involve many nicks and scratches around the shins and knees, maybe a lost toe, a few cuts to the hand, until the titan starts to get confused and tired, swings wildly to smash one of the more obvious nuisances, overextends, trips and falls on one hand, and while his neck is within reach the fighter jumps up and slashes his throat and everybody runs back and waits until he bleeds to death.

kelvingreen

07-15-2008 07:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9116897)

I'm with you on the lack of giant usage, but for me I think it's more conceptual. As I imagine a character fighting most giants, I can't picture that character reaching more than a leg, and a bunch of characters slashing at a giant's legs to kill it just isn't very appealing to me.

Maybe if giants were only 10 or 12 feet tall, max, I wouldn't have this problem? Or if I played through/saw a few battles with giants involving highly uneven ground? Where, say, characters had to climb up on boulders/ledges/whatever to effectively hit the giants? I dunno.

Shadow of the Colossus. 'Nuff said. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9117028)

A melee might involve many nicks and scratches around the shins and knees, maybe a lost toe, a few cuts to the hand, until the titan starts to get confused and tired, swings wildly to smash one of the more obvious nuisances, overextends, trips and falls on one hand, and while his neck is within reach the fighter jumps up and slashes his throat and everybody runs back and waits until he bleeds to death.

Although it was smaller than most *D&D* giants, the fight with the Moria troll in the film version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* was a good example of this kind of approach.

JasonK

07-15-2008 08:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Both of your comments, kelvin, touch on my own response when I read Sleeper's own comments, above:

I like what Sleeper's suggesting and, yes, Giants work for me like that. I can mentally handle a party of adventurers versus a giant or two in that "war of attrition, wear them away" sense (and I have); it's once you put seven of them "on the board" (so to speak) that my mind starts to find the 20 - 30 foot tall versions ridiculous.

I'm thinking increasingly in 4E frames these days, and so I'd say that giants work for me as Elites or Solo monsters, not as much else. But that, of course, is just me. I don't assume it should or has to work that way for anyone else.

~ jason

Setebos

07-15-2008 12:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9117028)

Combat in D&D is a strange mix of the very abstract and the fairly specific. Hit points are so amorphous it's really hard to pin down exactly what they represent, armor class is a mix of tin plates and dodging, and even the length of a round and the number of attacks have an abstract element. On the other hand, there are rules for death by massive damage (which kind of defeats the purpose of hit points), a detailed subsystem for aerial combat, and a specific note that a thief needs to be able to get near a giant's vitals to backstab.

How appropriate; I just now came across an example of schizophrenic abstraction vs. specificity so hilarious that I feel compelled to share it:

From an epic spell that sends its victims into *orbit*:

Quote:

Depending on the world where Nailed to the Sky is cast, conditions so far from its surface may be deadly. Deleterious effects include scorching heat, cold, and vacuum. Targets subject to these conditions take 2d6 points of damage each from heat or cold and 1d4 points of damage from the vacuum each round. The target immediately begins to suffocate.

Is it only me? Fritz the naked 20th-level Fighter gets sent into orbit and, provided he has a breathing effect (for purposes of illustration), survives in space for roughly *two minutes*.

Worse, based on conventional explanations of hit points, 90% of that is not his flesh boiling and freezing simultaneously; he's just becoming increasingly fatigued and demoralized.

JasonK

07-15-2008 12:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9118335)

Worse, based on conventional explanations of hit points, 90% of that is not his flesh boiling and freezing simultaneously; he's just becoming increasingly fatigued and demoralized.

To be fair, I'd be pretty demoralized and tired if I were rocketed into space and couldn't breathe... :)

~ jason

David J Prokopetz

07-15-2008 12:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9118335)

Is it only me? Fritz the naked 20th-level Fighter gets sent into orbit and, provided he has a breathing effect (for purposes of illustration), survives in space for roughly two minutes.

Worse, based on conventional explanations of hit points, 90% of that is not his flesh boiling and freezing simultaneously; he's just becoming increasingly fatigued and demoralized.

Amusingly, this subject comes up a lot in the context of sci-fi games; according to studies by NASA and the US Air Force, it turns out that humans really **can** survive a couple of minutes in hard vacuum, though you probably have - at most - ten to twelve seconds before you lose consciousness.

(This is more an example of Hollywood logic, tho'; in the movies, people are unreasonably resistant to blunt trauma, but incredibly fragile when faced with just about everything else. Humans generally aren't as squishy as you'd think.)

Setebos

07-15-2008 12:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9118353)

*...according to studies by NASA and the US Air Force, it turns out that humans really **can** survive a couple of minutes*

in hard vacuum, though you probably have - at most - ten to twelve seconds before you lose consciousness.

Was that a room-temperature vacuum, or pushed-out-of-the-space-station vacuum?
I'm not challenging your science or anything; I really am curious.

David J Prokopetz

07-15-2008 12:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9118368)

*Was that a room-temperature vacuum, or pushed-out-of-the-space-station vacuum?
I'm not challenging your science or anything; I really am curious.*

Hard vacuum doesn't have temperature. Direct sunlight is probably going to broil you alive in short order, of course, but barring that the thermal effects would be quite minimal. In a vacuum, there's simply nothing there to conduct your body heat away from you, so heat loss via radiant energy is all you have to worry about - and the human body doesn't radiate all that much.

Setebos

07-15-2008 12:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9118380)

Hard vacuum doesn't have temperature. Direct sunlight is probably going to broil you alive in short order, of course, but barring that the thermal effects would be quite minimal. In a vacuum, there's simply nothing there to conduct your body heat away from you, so heat loss via radiant energy is all you have to worry about - and the human body doesn't radiate all that much.

And suddenly I realize that I asked you how much kinetic energy Nothing has.

OK, back to monsters, before I step even further outside my expertise and start trying to have this conversation in Hungarian.

Here, to steer back toward the topic: I know what Jason K means. A party of PC's vs. a *party* of giants seems hard to describe tactically. You can't really block, parry, disarm, or engage them at all per se.

Only one answer: Transforming mecha, preferably with an awesome summoning song, sung by the upcoming bard class.

Mark my words. Wizards knows what it's doing.

P.S. Suddenly, I realized I'm not kidding. If giants are projections of the human subconscious, how better to fight them than with OTHER projections? Facilitated by some sort of psychic class, item, or potion, the pc's engage

huge monsters at the same level with their own dream-selves. Daikaiju ho! Maybe not a good long-term campaign idea, but a hell of a one-shot. Perhaps set in an enchanted valley or whatnot, where the pc's get to build alternate-class sub-characters and take some unusual builds out for a spin...

noisms

07-15-2008 01:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Oh well, I was hoping to keep the whole thing in the same thread, but never mind.

Giant, H-M

Hill Giant

Continuing the theme of Giant-equivalents-to-humanoid-races, Hill Giants are definitely orcs; ugly, brutish types who like violence. They're also probably the stereotypical, iconic Giant - what the average person thinks of when the word is mentioned. The Giant out of Jack and the Beanstalk was probably a Hill Giant.

Their favourite tactic is, naturally enough, chucking boulders, which they can also catch with a straight 30% chance of success - although I'm not sure when that skill ever comes in handy; do adventurers ever turn around and start throwing boulders *back* at the Giants?

Like orcs, Hill Giants are tough to imagine as anything other than big ugly things that want to kill you. That's okay, though - big ugly things that want to kill you are an integral part of any good D&D adventure.

Jungle Giant

We have another candidate for the "Elven-Cat List of Rarely Used Languages": Jungle Giants have their own tongue.

Jungle Giants are modeled on what might loosely be termed "Pulp Amazon Native". Big, lanky, Tarzan-esque things with jaguar-skin loincloths - except for the women, who have tasteful jaguar-skin bikinis *a la 1,000,000 years B.C.* They like to swing around on vines, carry out ambushes, and hunt big game.

The entry bizarrely goes into some detail about the size of the Giants' bows (15') and arrows (6'), which is too big for any ordinary sized creature to use. It seems obvious to me - not sure why it has to be made explicit. Their lairs are "50% likely to shelter 1-6 giant dragonflies".

Jungle Giants are a good candidate, I think, for the "degenerate remnants of a long-lost civilization" shtick. Like the Maya peoples who the Spaniards discovered in the early 1500s in the Yucatan, they could be the survivors of a great disaster centuries previously, which laid waste to their mighty jungle society. Now they are just a shadow of their former selves, and have forgotten much of what they once knew.

Mountain Giant

It's quite difficult to separate Mountain and Hill Giants, and I suppose a case can be made that there really doesn't need to be two separate species or entries. Like Hill/Mountain Dwarves, they probably could have been done on the same page. The main difference is that Mountain Giants are Chaotic Neutral, and so can live in peace with other races - unlike their Chaotic Evil Hill Giant brethren.

Mountain Giants can summon ogres, hill giants or trolls, who they can give loose commands. They also sometimes have shamans.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Oh well, I was hoping to keep the whole thing in the same thread, but never mind.

Giant, H-M

Hill Giant

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Mountain Giants can summon ogres, hill giants or trolls, who they can give loose commands. They also sometimes have shamans.

Like the Eblis, Mountain Giants were an oddball monster I always wanted to use in the numerous 2E campaigns I'd think up but never run, lacking players and friends and all back in my youth.

My basic idea was to have said Mountain Giant as a shaman and wiseman the player could ally with and consult, though approaching him could be very risky. I can't recall exactly, but I think they could be up to 5th level clerics.

I did not like the 3E revamp of the Mountain Giant, which made it a CR 22, 23 critter and made them stupid and nasty as hell. Rendered my old idea very hard to utilize.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

Crinos

07-15-2008 02:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 9118560)

I did not like the 3E revamp of the Mountain Giant, which made it a CR 22, 23 critter and made them stupid and nasty as hell. Rendered my old idea very hard to utilize.

I think they did the revamp in order to A) make the Mountain Giants more unique, rather than just (non evil hill giants who can summon monsters), and B) in order to flesh out more high level monsters for the MM2, which was kind of one of its selling points (they sort of did the same thing with the Banshees and some of the monsters brought over from Dark Sun like the Famine Spirit and the Nightmare Beast)

J Harper

07-15-2008 02:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9118605)

I think they did the revamp in order to A) make the Mountain Giants more unique, rather than just (non evil hill giants who can summon monsters), and B) in order to flesh out more high level monsters for the MM2, which was kind of one of its selling points (they sort of did the same thing with the Banshees and some of the monsters brought over from Dark Sun like the Famine Spirit and the Nightmare Beast)

I think I recall hearing that the purpose of the MM II was to get some higher level beasties into play. WOTC's reasoning to revamp the Mountain Giant is perfectly valid - I just didn't care for the results, but it ultimately wasn't a big deal. Certainly didn't keep me from running 3.5 for (combined in two big chunks) nearly a year straight.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

demiurge1138

07-15-2008 03:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The problem with the high CR MMII monsters is how generally useless they are for their CR. All of the undead are ridiculously fragile, but have too many Hit Dice to ever, ever turn. The linnorms are also very underpowering, and the hellfire wyrm, their most powerful, is basically a red dragon with a weaker breath weapon, no spellcasting, and a higher CR.

There's a reason I re-wrote many of them for my own purposes.

J Harper

07-15-2008 03:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9118676)

The problem with the high CR MMII monsters is how generally useless they are for their CR. All of the undead are ridiculously fragile, but have too many Hit Dice to ever, ever turn. The linnorms are also very underpowering, and the hellfire wyrm, their most powerful, is basically a red dragon with a weaker breath weapon, no spellcasting, and a higher CR.

There's a reason I re-wrote many of them for my own purposes.

MM II 3.0 never really impressed me. I didn't manage to get my game to high enough level, but I don't think there were any critters in that book I would have used, save for the Linnorms, which I found to my taste. Didn't realize they're underpowered, though.

Cheers,

Jeremy Harper

Skiorht

07-15-2008 05:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Their favourite tactic is, naturally enough, chucking boulders, which they can also catch with a straight 30% chance of success - although I'm not sure when that skill ever comes in handy; do adventurers ever turn around and start throwing boulders back at the Giants?

The catching rocks reference is a relic of earlier editions, and probably harkens back to D&D's wargaming roots. When you have a horde of humanoids assaulting a keep, the logical reaction is to chuck big rocks with your catapult at the biggest, baddest creatures you see. Then the crew gets a nasty surprise as the giant catches the

rock and returns the favour.

Wakboth

07-15-2008 08:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I remember using hill giants in BECM I D&D a few times; including once when the party was beat up after the previous encounter (a blue dragon, IIRC), so they quickly retreated into a side cavern too small for the giants to get into, and too long that they could be reached.

So I had the giants practice their boulder-bowling skills. :D

(The jungle giantess is another one for the highly incorrect list of Babes of Monster Manual, by the way. :))

sim_james

07-15-2008 08:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The only way this thread will make it to Z is if nobody makes any comments.

So keep bringing the awesome, even if it ends up spawning even more sequels.

Kakita Kojiro

07-15-2008 10:39 PM

You know, that [Terrain] Giant nomenclature just goes vaguely wrong with the Jungle Giant. Their name seems so... I dunno... like something Colonial-era settlers use to sneeringly refer to natives, maybe? Too similar to racial pejoratives, in any case.

noisms

07-15-2008 11:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9119715)

You know, that [Terrain] Giant nomenclature just goes vaguely wrong with the Jungle Giant. Their name seems so... I dunno... like something Colonial-era settlers use to sneeringly refer to natives, maybe? Too similar to racial pejoratives, in any case.

The Jungle Giants are rather "Ooga Booga!" if you know what I mean. Not exactly a nuanced portrayal of people who live in jungles; then again they are giants, not humans, so it's probably okay if they're completely one-dimensional.

Sleeper

07-15-2008 11:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9118416)

P.S. Suddenly, I realized I'm not kidding. If giants are projections of the human subconscious, how better to fight them than with OTHER projections? Facilitated by some sort of psychic class, item, or potion, the pc's engage huge monsters at the same level with their own dream-selves. Daikaiju ho! Maybe not a good long-term campaign idea, but a hell of a one-shot. Perhaps set in an enchanted valley or whatnot, where the pc's get to build alternate-class sub-characters and take some unusual builds out for a spin...

Y'know, that might explain the size problems. Movies are horribly inconsistent when it comes to the size of giant monsters (King Kong swatting planes from the Empire State Building is a lot bigger than the original island beast), but the problem predates that medium. In Rabelais' epic satire for instance, Pantagruel has an entire nation of people living in his teeth, but also fits into an ordinary courtroom.

Maybe it's not the stories that are inconsistent. Maybe it's the giants themselves. When you face a giant in the distance, they appear to be huge, legendary monstrosities. But if you get up the courage to challenge one, to face one in combat, you're humanizing it. The giant appears more mundane, more manageable, and starts to shrink. As you start to land blows, as it starts to appear the colossal challenge might be overcome, the giant shrinks even further. Until, finally, you slay it -- and laid out there in the dirt is a mere 9 or 10 ft. tall form. Not the 50 or 100 ft. tall titan you initially faced.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Jungle Giants are modeled on what might loosely be termed "Pulp Amazon Native". Big, lanky, Tarzan-esque things with jaguar-skin loincloths - except for the women, who have tasteful jaguar-skin bikinis a la 1,000,000 years B.C. They like to swing around on vines, carry out ambushes, and hunt big game.

You might be able to see a band of jungle giants coming in the distance by the swaying of the palms as the trees bend like bows under their weight. Their terrority might be marked by the splintered trunks of once-straight and tall trees.

Mark Krawec

07-15-2008 11:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Their favourite tactic is, naturally enough, chucking boulders, which they can also catch with a straight 30% chance of success - although I'm not sure when that skill ever comes in handy; do adventurers ever turn around and start throwing boulders back at the Giants?

When somebody's packing a girdle of giant strength. Then you end up with a boulder volley like Travolta &

Slater pitching the same hand grenade back & forth in *Broken Arrow*.

Maybe.

JRM

07-16-2008 12:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Jungle Giant Jungle Giants are modeled on what might loosely be termed "Pulp Amazon Native". Big, lanky, Tarzan-esque things with jaguar-skin loincloths - except for the women, who have tasteful jaguar-skin bikinis a la 1,000,000 years B.C. They like to swing around on vines, carry out ambushes, and hunt big game.

Jungle Giants are a good candidate, I think, for the "degenerate remnants of a long-lost civilization" shtick. Like the Maya peoples who the Spaniards discovered in the early 1500s in the Yucatan, they could be the survivors of a great disaster centuries previously, which laid waste to their mighty jungle society. Now they are just a shadow of their former selves, and have forgotten much of what they once knew.

Well there's no mention of Jungle Giants swinging from vines in the description, though with a Climb speed of 6 they do work as 'giant tarzans'. There are a couple of bits I'm surprised you didn't mention.

Firstly, they're really skinny - an 18' tall 3000 pound male Jungle Giant is equivalent to a 6' human weighing 111 pounds. And their females are even taller and thinner. Despite this they're as strong as frost giants, who have the same height but weigh almost three times as much (8000 pounds).

That reminds me - the 2nd edition giants heights, weights and strength are all over the place. Firbolg and Desert Giants are both as strong as a 16', 4500 pounds Hill Giant, but the former are 10'6" and 800 lbs, the latter 17' and 7000 lbs - although being partially petrified may account for Desert Giants' high weight.

Hmm... Stone Giants are also very heavy for their size due to high density flesh, maybe they're cousins of Desert Giants that found a way to live with their petrifying curse?

Also, Jungle Giants are friendly for giants, but are ravenous carnivores who only respect other predators & hunters, there are potential story hooks in there apart from the obvious one of them eating defeated PCs: Jungle Giants would hunt their relatives the Wood Giants as prey just because they're herbivores, and the PCs may try to stop them; or the party could go after a fearsome quarry in order to impress a tribe of Jungle Giants and gain their aid.

Quote:

Originally Posted by J Harper (Post 9118560)

I did not like the 3E revamp of the Mountain Giant, which made it a CR 22, 23 critter and made them stupid and nasty as hell. Rendered my old idea very hard to utilize.

Yup, they're pretty feeble as a CR 22/23 threat. They just do a lot of mundane damage and have a high fort save. Any 15th+ level party that targets a 3rd edition Mountain Giant's weaknesses, such as Reflex / Will save spells, will bring them down with contemptuous ease.

Belchion

07-16-2008 12:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9119853)

Maybe it's not the stories that are inconsistent. Maybe it's the giants themselves. When you face a giant in the distance, they appear to be huge, legendary monstrosities.

That reminds me of the "Scheinriese" in "Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivführer" (however those are translated to English). Basically, "Herr Tur Tur", the Scheinriese, grows the larger the farther you are from him, in the end, Lukas and Jim offer him to stay at Lummerland, because the island is too small to get so far from him as to be scared of his size and he is very useful as lighthouse for ships, who are farther away. As a sidenote, Herr Tur Tur says that one could call ordinary humans "Scheinzwerge", because they would shrink the farther away you get.

Setebos

07-16-2008 12:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9120185)

That reminds me of the "Scheinriese" in "Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivführer" (however those are translated to English). Basically, "Herr Tur Tur", the Scheinriese, grows the larger the farther you are from him, in the end, Lukas and Jim offer him to stay at Lummerland, because the island is too small to get so far from him as to be scared of his size and he is very useful as lighthouse for ships, who are farther away. As a sidenote, Herr Tur Tur says that one could call ordinary humans "Scheinzwerge", because they would shrink the farther away you get.

Hang on...if person A and person B are different distances away from him, how big is he? Is it based on the average distance to other intelligent creatures?

Not that the story necessarily tells you, but I'd love to hash out the rules.

Details!

Belchion

07-16-2008 01:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9120218)

Hang on...if person A and person B are different distances away from him, how big is he? Is it based on the average distance to other intelligent creatures?

Not that the story necessarily tells you, but I'd love to hash out the rules.

In the story it is all an optical effect, just as normal people *seem* to shrink if you get away from them, Scheinriesen *seem* to grow if you get away from them. Kinda reversed optics, if you want to. Thus, he would be of different size for person A and person B.

demiurge1138

07-16-2008 01:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mark Krawec (Post 9119879)

When somebody's packing a girdle of giant strength. Then you end up with a boulder volley like Travolta & Slater pitching the same hand grenade back & forth in Broken Arrow.

Maybe.

I think the "giants can catch boulders" is a vestigial relic of the game from its origins as Chainmail, an add-on of fantastic elements onto medieval wargaming. In a game where your opponent is fronting catapults at you, having some boulder-catching giants in your warband is a good idea.

Setebos

07-16-2008 02:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9118539)

Their favourite tactic is, naturally enough, chucking boulders, which they can also catch with a straight 30% chance of success - although I'm not sure when that skill ever comes in handy; do adventurers ever turn around and start throwing boulders back at the Giants?

The oddity of the rule aside, I'm surprised no one's complained about what a hideous bit of exception-based design it is, because there's no reason to make it a percentage roll at all.

And so I'll do it.

It's one thing to toss an ad hoc system into the book for things that have no obvious basis in stats--"Chocolate puddings have a 50% chance of having sprinkles"--but this is a Dexterity check if I ever saw one. If 30% is an important number, the MM could just give the action a default check penalty (if their Dex isn't that low already...). If you really want, require a secondary Strength check to hold onto a particularly large rock they managed to put their hand in front of.

Come on, TSR. Gitcher shit teggither.

EDIT: And then I remember...2e monsters don't HAVE Dexterity scores.

sigh

Malignant Marionette

07-16-2008 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9120345)

In the story it is all an optical effect, just as normal people seem to shrink if you get away from them, Scheinriesen seem to grow if you get away from them. Kinda reversed optics, if you want to. Thus, he would be of different size for person A and person B.

I wonder what would happen if you catapulted him into space, where there is no horizon to block line of sight and whether thinking about him too much will make my brain hurt. :p

ogier300

07-16-2008 07:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I always assumed the "catch a boulder" % was included as part of the world-building that seemed to happen in the old days. As a DM, you needed to know what would happen if there was every Giant on Giant fights with rock tossing.

Though now I'm imagining a Hill Giant baseball team...

noisms

07-16-2008 11:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9120163)

That reminds me - the 2nd edition giants heights, weights and strength are all over the place. Firbolg and Desert Giants are both as strong as a 16', 4500 pounds Hill Giants, but the former are 10'6" and 800 lbs, the latter 17' and 7000 lbs - although being partially petrified may account for Desert Giants' high weight.

Maybe different types of Giant flesh are stronger. Although it does seem odd that Firbolgs should be as powerful as Hill Giants, given that the text description mentions that Hill Giants are very powerful for their size, with bigger muscles than larger Giants.

Wakboth

07-16-2008 04:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9120597)

The oddity of the rule aside, I'm surprised no one's complained about what a hideous bit of exception-based design it is, because there's no reason to make it a percentage roll at all.

Come on, if we ragged on every bit of (clumsy) exception-based design in 2e, we'd fill this thread before we got out of H. :D

Belchion

07-16-2008 04:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9121409)

I wonder what would happen if you catapulted him into space, where there is no horizon to block line of sight and whether thinking about him too much will make my brain hurt. :p

1) No idea, I am not even sure there was anything like "space" in that novel's world. 2) Probably, because I took this from a children's tale (age 5-10) which also includes propagating steam locomotives and pirate ships that bounce cannon balls back on the attackers ship.

JRM

07-16-2008 05:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9123180)

1) No idea, I am not even sure there was anything like "space" in that novel's world. 2) Probably, because I took this from a children's tale (age 5-10) which also includes propagating steam locomotives and pirate ships that bounce cannon balls back on the attackers ship.

What, the locomotives have carnal relations with each other? Isn't that too steamy to be suitable for a children's book?

JRM

07-16-2008 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9122375)

Maybe different types of Giant flesh are stronger. Although it does seem odd that Firbolgs should be as powerful as Hill Giants, given that the text description mentions that Hill Giants are very powerful for their size, with bigger muscles than larger Giants.

Yes, I assume some sorts of giants have relatively stronger flesh than others just like halflings have muscles stronger than an equivalent sized human. It's not unheard of in nature - female chimpanzees, for example, can be as small and light as a D&D gnome or halfling, but have 4-6 times the upper body strength of an average male human.

Belchion

07-16-2008 06:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9123281)

What, the locomotives have carnal relations with each other? Isn't that too steamy to be suitable for a children's book?

The story just says that the locomotive is pregnant and later bears a child. It is never detailed how she gets pregnant and I cannot even remember they met any other locomotives.

JRM

07-16-2008 06:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9123327)

The story just says that the locomotive is pregnant and later bears a child. It is never detailed how she gets pregnant and I cannot even remember they met any other locomotives.

Well I guess sapient locomotives could have very long gestation periods, so the encounter may have taken place a long time before the story takes place. If the gravid train is specified as being female that would imply a male was necessary for reproduction.

Does the original story being in German make the gender-issue unclear? From what I remember of the language it applies gender to nouns more or less at random. Hmm, after glancing in a German-English dictionary a locomotive is feminine in German (Die Lokomotive), but a train and railway carriage are both masculine (Der Eisenbahnzug, Der Eisenbahnwagen). That explains it! A sapient locomotive changes from female to male with the aid of attachments.;

Belchion

07-16-2008 07:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9123362)

Does the original story being in German make the gender-issue unclear?

No, she was named Emma, a distinctly female name. It was quite clear throughout the book that she is female, as well as her daughter Molly. (On the other hand, those locomotives could swim / double as submarine and drive below water without railways when calked)

Oh, the books is available in English, too: Jim Button and Luke the engine-driver. Read it, it is great! (As are all other books by that author)

Jimmy Fingers

07-16-2008 08:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9123421)

Oh, the books is available in English, too: Jim Button and Luke the engine-driver. Read it, it is great! (As are all other books by that author)

The Neverending Story is from the same author for example. Which is a real childrens fantasy classic (and less cheesier than the movie).

JRM

07-16-2008 08:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Jimmy Fingers (Post 9123501)

The Neverending Story is from the same author for example. Which is a real childrens fantasy classic (and less cheesier than the movie).

Oh it's a Michael Ende book is it, never read any of them. I've seen some of his books in bookshops in Austria and Germany, but they aren't very common over here in the UK, I only remember the occasional copy of Puffin's edition of The Neverending Story and Momo. English translations of Mr Ende seem to be a lot more popular in the US.

JRM

07-16-2008 08:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9119853)

Maybe it's not the stories that are inconsistent. Maybe it's the giants themselves. When you face a giant in the distance, they appear to be huge, legendary monstrosities. But if you get up the courage to challenge one, to face one in combat, you're humanizing it.

Come to think of it, I once had a variable-sized giant in an adventure. Now why didn't I remember that sooner? The PCs had stopped for the night in the Secret World (a celtic-style 'Other Side' with all kinds of faerie weirdness) when something like a vertical thundercloud appeared over the horizon, diminishing to a 400' giant by the time it reached their camp. (I chose the giant's size so I could just pick up one of the PC's miniatures and say "If I'm the giant your character is literally this small". A Druidic Lore check told them the giant's weakness was three golden hairs atop his head (hidden among a thatch of black hair), so they needed to climb up his body to reach them - one reckless PCs choosing to climb up *inside* a giant trouserleg.

Once they reached the giant's scalp the scale changed again so it was hundreds of feet across, and they had to hack their way through hair fighting off head lice the size of hogs in order to reach and uproot the golden hairs, whereupon the giant shrank down to a score or two feet and surrendered.

Zartes

07-16-2008 10:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9123604)

A Druidic Lore check told them the giant's weakness was three golden hairs atop his head (hidden among a thatch of black hair), so they needed to climb up his body to reach them - one reckless PCs choosing to climb up inside a giant trouserleg.

Somebody's gonna be making a sanity check for that one... :p

noisms

07-17-2008 01:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Giant, R-S

Reef Giant

Reef Giants always struck me as one of the more interesting variants, being somewhat reminiscent of Polynesian culture in concept and artwork. If you ask me there never was enough attention paid to Polynesian myth and culture in D&D - which is odd because it strikes me as a fantastic setting for adventure. People striking out into the vast unknown ocean, searching for land, discovering tiny islands peopled by bizarre beasts and hostile monstrous races... Anyway, the Reef Giants are another race who really should have been included in 3rd edition.

Reef Giants are hunter gatherers of the sea, fishing and searching coral reefs for their food. They also sometimes

become sailors on bigger ships, something which I'm definitely going to figure into a campaign *somewhere*. They make a tough fight for a gang of adventurers due to their whirlpool ability and ease of movement underwater, but I suppose their position is more likely to be that of an ally than an enemy. It'd be quite cool to have a big face-off between the PCs plus Reef Giant allies on one side, and Big Bad plus Topaz Dragons on the other. With Crabmen and Sahuagin caught in between, just for shits and giggles.

Man, I really need to get a coastal campaign up and running one of these days...

Stone Giant

In the rock-catching event at the Giant Olympics, Stone Giants always come out on top: unlike the Hill Giants, who can only catch boulders 30% of the time, Stone Giants make 90% of their catches. In case that isn't enough exception-based design for you, apparently 50% of Stone Giants can speak common.

This is one of the rare entries wherein a monster's tactics are described in some detail. Stone Giants will disguise themselves against a stony area and then step out to surprise foes with a broadside of boulders; they will then retreat and cause avalanches of stone once their enemies get too close. It's interesting that the 2nd edition designers didn't include more of this sort of thing in the MM; it just goes to show what a different game it was from the 3rd and 4th editions.

Another point of note: Stone Giants apparently keep *Giant Goats* as pets, which they use for milk, cheese and butter. Giant Goats! Why don't *they* get an entry in the MM!?!

Storm Giant

The art work for the Storm Giant makes him look a bit like Zeus, which I suppose is what the race is based on, along with Thor - big guys with beards who can chuck lightning bolts. In fact Storm Giants are all-round badasses. -6 AC with armour, plus huge two-handed swords which do 3-30+12 points of damage, and 19 Hit Dice. Don't piss one off if you can help it. Although then again they "spend their time musing about the world, composing and playing music, and tilling their land or gathering food," which doesn't sound like they're very easily piss-offable. Definitely these are the Giant version of Centaurs, as Cloud Giants are Elves.

This entry is notable for demonstrating the great diversity of languages in the 2nd edition D&D universe: Storm Giants speak their own language, the Cloud Giant language, the common Giant language, and common. If any DMs made use of those languages in actual play, I'll eat my hat.

JRM

07-17-2008 03:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Stone Giants are my favourite of the original D&D giants. Mostly its just that I liked their flavour - keeping bears as pets, camouflage against stone, master boulder-hurlers, impassive features that conceal an often playful nature.

Plus, being neutral they can interact with PCs more often than the evil (or should that be Evil!) Hill, Fire and Frost giants, who my players only met as enemy combatants in the campaigns I ran. I don't remember using Cloud and Storm giants very often, they just seemed too 'fairy tale' for most of my adventures.

kelvingreen

07-17-2008 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9124646)
Storm Giant

The art work for the Storm Giant makes him look a bit like Zeus

I've always loved the art on this one. What is he doing? Why is he gesturing like that? Is he directing the building of a new extension to his castle, or is that some kind of Storm Giant terrorist fist jab? ;)

Setebos

07-17-2008 03:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9124646)
This entry is notable for demonstrating the great diversity of languages in the 2nd edition D&D universe: Storm Giants speak their own language, the Cloud Giant language, the common Giant language, and common. If any DMs made use of those languages in actual play, I'll eat my hat.

Ah...species=culture, my old enemy. We meet again. Why would Storm Giants all speak the same language, utterly distinct from anyone else's?

I realize that not all intelligent species can mix freely in harmony and that there's bound to be a certain amount of balkanization when some of them look so different from each other, so that species and culture will overlap significantly, (racial divides in the real world times a thousand), but in D&D it seems so...automatic. Really, considering the relatively modern values in D&D's pseudo-medieval setting (female adventurers, generally benevolent and altruistic monarchs, streets presumably free of poop), I'd expect a lot more species cohabitation (City of Giants, perhaps, if only because they share scale), such that species-languages almost become extinct.

It's probably just a symptom of resolution incompatibilities when dealing with different races. Humans speak multiple tongues, live in multiple nations across the Earth, seldom get along, and worship any of a thousand gods. Elves? Elves speak Elf, live in forests, period, and worship Elf Gods (unless they're Nazi Elves, who worship Vannelvelivelianasushafalan Hitler).

It's Single Biome Planet all over again.

Sleeper

07-17-2008 03:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9124646)
Another point of note: Stone Giants apparently keep Giant Goats as pets, which they use for milk, cheese and butter. Giant Goats! Why don't they get an entry in the MM!?!

In 1st edition AD&D, they did. And regular, non-giant goats got an entry in the MM2. Apparently being a farmer was good practice for being an adventurer.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9124837)

Ah...species=culture, my old enemy. We meet again.

That's actually why I liked the race = class in the old Basic/Cyclopedia/BECMI/whatever sets. If you're going to equate race and culture, you might as well go all the way and codify the stereotype into the game mechanics. And in some ways, it makes sense. If you have a cosmopolitan world where the races intermingle and there are many subtle differences, it's one thing. But if the other rares are very rare, and their homelands are small, distant, and isolated, they might feature in just one or two adventures. In that case, it's a good shortcut and a way to enforce those differences with minimal work. This doesn't work as well for PCs in a long-term campaign, but the monocultures are at least as rich and detailed as most fantasy cultures anyway. Most are inconsistent mixes of poorly remembered medieval history, the latest mass-market fantasy saga, and modern sensibilities tempered with just a dash of fantastic elements. Fantasy runs into the same problem science fiction does -- it's really hard to develop cultures and mindsets that truly diverge from the human norm. It's even harder when you throw players in the mix, because you can't expect them to read, appreciate, and implement a detailed 300-page psychological profile. Something accessible, something different in a few superficial and familiar ways, maybe with a minor twist, is much more practical. Elves as nazis, dwarves as Scots, halflings as bucolic English farmers, etc. Then give them blue hair or a lisp, and call it a culture.

ogier300

07-17-2008 03:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Why would Storm Giants all speak the same language, utterly distinct from anyone else's?

So they can make plans to betray the other giants when the time is right, without having to worry about some pesky Hill Giant or Fire Giant understanding them, of course. How embarrassing to be understood when you're visiting the Hill Giant Chief's Steading otherwise.

Setebos

07-17-2008 04:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Has anyone ever run a campaign in a Giant's world, perhaps to an absurd scale--say entirely behind the baseboards of an otherwise unremarkable Giant home, or in a Giant's backyard? Where the PC's have years of adventures in the basements, crannies, attics, etc of a single village? This being a fantasy world, they wouldn't be limited to tiresome vermin-slaying ("Centipede as dragon" gets a little old, I'd assume); there could be all sorts of tiny magical societies living in the walls.

Any experiences like this?

Kakita Kojiro

07-17-2008 10:21 AM

I find myself wanting to bash together some sort of Ringworld-of-Giants -- long ago the giants settled the Ringworld. Over numberless generations they spread to occupy *every freakin' environmental niche that exists*. Mostly I want to do so because of this:

PC: "Well, we've concluded our negotiations with the Prarie Giants."

Prarie Giant: "Yes. And now, for the [rishathra](#)."

PC: :eek:

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9124927)

In 1st edition AD&D, they did. And regular, non-giant goats got an entry in the MM2. Apparently being a farmer was good practice for being an adventurer.

Probably because of all the ankhegs.

Wakboth

07-17-2008 03:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I'm not sure if they used the name "Reef Giant", but I think they got converted for 3e in one of the later MMs. (Along with the jungle giants, I think...)

And yeah, there's a distinct lack of seafaring campaigns in D&D.

Jimmy Fingers

07-17-2008 05:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9126979)

I'm not sure if they used the name "Reef Giant", but I think they got converted for 3e in one of the later MMs. (Along with the jungle giants, I think...)

And yeah, there's a distinct lack of seafaring campaigns in D&D.

The Golden Voyages campaign, for Al-Qadim is a very nice one. It even features Reef Giants. Well, one at least. ;)

Sleeper

07-17-2008 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9126249)
Probably because of all the ankhegs.

No, it was all the farm animals. Tussle with a few goats and horses, and ankhegs are suddenly a piece of cake. :)

noisms

07-18-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Giant, V

And to finish off, two of the lesser-known and lesser-used (I believe) Giant varieties, and another two who were (I think) left out of 3rd edition for good or ill.

Verbeeg

Verbeeg (Verbeegs?) are the smallest Giant, standing only 8 1/2 - 10 feet tall and weighing only 300-400 lbs. This makes them rather skinny, although they are strong for their weight (see above discussion). They are basically oversized humans, as it were, rather than true Giants, and are even given the moniker "human behemoth". Their favourite weapon is the spear, with which they are especially skilled, and they often hang out with dire wolves and wargs. They are the weakest race of Giants, being little better than ogres in a fight. To be honest, I'd love to know what the origin of the Verbeeg is - they sound like a D&D-ised mythical creature of some kind, but I'm not sure what language 'Verbeeg' is (if any).

Verbeeg's are most notable for being the 'brains' of the operation when it comes to Hill Giants and ogres: "To watch a group in action can be hilarious, so long as you are not their intended victim. Hill giants and ogres are too stupid to think much on their own. They tend to follow directions too literally. This usually infuriates the verbeeg. They hop back and forth from foot to foot screaming insults at the befuddled giants that tower over them in height and size, as even the simplest instructions are misinterpreted by these denser humanoids." This ought to make the Verbeeg Big Bad material, or at least more of a serious threat to civilisation and all that jazz. But there's a whiff of the ridiculous that hangs over the entire entry, from the picture right through the text. I can't quite put my finger on what it is, but definitely the art - a fat, balding guy who looks like he should be at work in an insurance office - is a bad starting point.

Verbeeg are just small (in a relative sense) enough to, you would think, be the most common source of half-Giants. I'm extrapolating that out of nowhere, but it seems to make sense.

Wood Giant (Voadkyn)

Okay, so I know I said Cloud Giants are the elves of Gianthood and Storm Giants are the Centaurs, but really I suppose the Voadkyn should take either prize. At 9 1/2 feet tall and 700 lbs, they're basically oversized wood elves, complete with silly ears, long bows, and a love of trees.

One point of interest is that Wood Giants gain a 50% range bonus because of the size of their bows; but this isn't mentioned in any of the other Giant entries - even the ones who commonly use bows. When you think about it, a properly strung bow for one of the bigger Giant races - a Storm Giant, let's say - should be able to fire arrows at targets literally miles away. I'm sure the maths could be worked out by somebody...

Fight-wise, Wood Giants are one of those specially-designed-to-annoy monsters who players love to hate. Not only can they polymorph; they can also turn themselves effectively invisible in forest environments, while all the time popping out of hiding to shoot arrows "as if from nowhere". That sort of thing is bloody irritating as a player. Strangely enough as a DM I get all turned around on the subject.

Last but not least, Wood Giants have special lower jaws just for grinding up leaves, roots and other vegetation. This should mean, I think, that technically they spend basically every single waking moment eating, like all creatures that live off leaves do.

DMH

07-18-2008 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128377)

[u][size="5"]

Verbeeg

Verbeeg (Verbeegs?)

"Dat ve are!"

I didn't pick up on that stupid joke until a few weeks ago while scanning ahead for this thread. It makes them even less useful IMO.

Crinos

07-18-2008 01:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

My first dnd monster book was the old 3 ring binder monstrous compendium (both parts 1 and 2) and the Verbeeg picture in that was somewhat better (it made them look creepy because it seemed like the Verbeeg's face was almost melting)

The MM Verbeeg however looks like Danny Devito the barbarian.

noisms

07-18-2008 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9128476)

"Dat ve are!"

I didn't pick up on that stupid joke until a few weeks ago while scanning ahead for this thread. It makes them even less useful IMO.

Drat. Where's that damned rolling-eyes smiley when you need it? ;)

noisms

07-18-2008 01:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9128478)
The MM Verbeeg however looks like Danny Devito the barbarian.

Ha! I was thinking George Costanza the Barbarian, but yeah, Danny Devito is a much better fit.

demiurge1138

07-18-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Verbeegs did make it into 3.X, albeit in its latest days. They were in both Expedition to the Ruins of Castle Greyhawk and an issue of Dungeon Magazine, as variant half-ogres with less mental ability score penalties.

The hopping back and forth etc always made me think of verbeegs as good Big Bads for sillier, lighter-toned games. Also, the illustration reminds me most strongly of Gargamel from the Smurfs.

Inyssius

07-18-2008 01:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128377)
Verbeeg
To be honest, I'd love to know what the origin of the Verbeeg is - they sound like a D&D-ised mythical creature of some kind, but I'm not sure what language 'Verbeeg' is (if any).

Well, see, they are *ver' beeg* people. Ver', ver' beeg. No's beeg a'de odder giants, but beeg all de same.

Quote:

Last but not least, Wood Giants have special lower jaws just for grinding up leaves, roots and other vegetation.

(brought to you by the Free-Association Far The Salvage Of Pathetic Monsters):

But not special *upper* jaws? They're like Darth Malak or something? I'm getting flashbacks to that one scene in Kotor, with Revan's old outpost under the colossal jungle--a race of solitary nine-foot-tall forest-dwelling megalomaniac cyborg ranger Sith...

shirosan

07-18-2008 04:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9126979)
And yeah, there's a distinct lack of seafaring campaigns in D&D.

This just reminded me of one of my all-time great "campaigns I'll never run". The action would kick off with the PCs forming the core of a pirate crew. They'd have their own ship and spend the first couple levels raising hell and whatnot. Their lucks starts to run out when a pirate hunter starts tracking them. The campaign shifts (away from seafaring, admittedly) when, on the run from the hunter, they're sucked into a whirlpool and gated into the Planescape setting. The good news? Now they've got a flying, interdimensional pirate ship. Much gonzo campaigning to follow.

::sigh::

Oh well, can't run 'em all.

Setebos

07-18-2008 06:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128486)
Ha! I was thinking George Costanza the Barbarian, but yeah, Danny Devito is a much better fit.

Danny Devito's so short, though. Not that the ideal candidate should be 9 feet tall; it's just that someone so exceptionally short as Devito throws me off.

David Koechner the barbarian?

JRM

07-18-2008 06:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9126249)

I find myself wanting to bash together some sort of Ringworld-of-Giants -- long ago the giants settled the Ringworld. Over numberless generations they spread to occupy every freakin' environmental niche that exists. Mostly I want to do so because of this:

PC: "Well, we've concluded our negotiations with the Prarie Giants."

Prarie Giant: "Yes. And now, for the rishathra."

PC: :eek:

To paraphrase from the Ringworld Engineers. "So, do your people perform rishathra with Prairie Giants?"

"Yes, but *carefully*." :eek:

Crinos

07-18-2008 06:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9129153)

Danny Devito's so short, though. Not that the ideal candidate should be 9 feet tall; it's just that someone so exceptionally short as Devito throws me off.

David Koechner the barbarian?

I just meant the guy in the picture reminds me of Danny Devito: Short, bulky, balding, surly looking, even has sort of a beaked nose like Devito.

Sides, if they can use computers in that lord of the rings movie to make Elijah Wood 3 feet tall so he can be Frodo, they can sure as hell make Danny Devito 9 feet tall to play what equates to a giant crime boss.

JRM

07-18-2008 07:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128486)

Ha! I was thinking George Costanza the Barbarian, but yeah, Danny Devito is a much better fit.

I'm thinking of Vizzini from The Princess Bride as played by Wallace Shawn ("Inconceivable!"), he certainly looks like the Verbeeg picture and did plenty of furious shouting at dim-witted colleagues. Fezzik would make a good Hill Giant, methinks.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128377)

Verbeeg are just small (in a relative sense) enough to, you would think, be the most common source of half-Giants. I'm extrapolating that out of nowhere, but it seems to make sense.

Not necessarily, maybe all giants have the relevant organs built to 'human scale', making cross-breeding easier. Also, the half-giant could be giantish on their mother's side, in which case any size inadequacies on their father's side may have been disappointing for the lady, but would not prevent conception.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128377)

One point of interest is that Wood Giants gain a 50% range bonus because of the size of their bows; but this isn't mentioned in any of the other Giant entries - even the ones who commonly use bows. When you think about it, a properly strung bow for one of the bigger Giant races - a Storm Giant, let's say - should be able to fire arrows at targets literally miles away. I'm sure the maths could be worked out by somebody...

The main limitation on the range/power of a bow is the material its made of. It's basically impossible to make a 6' wooden longbow with a draw-strength much over 200 pounds without it snapping at full draw. Unfortunately the problem scales inversely with length, so a 12' wooden longbow would likely snap if bent with over a hundredweight or two. Realistically, a giant-sized bow would need to be made out of some extraordinary material (magical wood, dragonbone, carbon-fibre laminate or whatever). Its possible to get around this limit using a multi-bow crossbow design, but such a weapon would be very awkward to fire by hand.

Alternatively, a giant 'bow' could be a torsion engine (basically a handheld [ballistae](#)) rather than a tension-engine like a bow or crossbow. These can bear much greater loads than a bow because their firing arms don't need to flex to store power so can be built thicker, the missiles energy is stored in skeins of fibre at the firing-arms base instead.

A ballista could throw an arrow 400-500 yards. There are apocryphal accounts of some siege engines spitting an arrow ~1000 yards, which is certainly possible considering there are [flight records](#) for crossbows exceeding 2000 yards, while conventional longbow flight archers have difficulty exceeding 400 yards.

Numanoid

07-18-2008 12:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9128478)

The MM Verbeeg however looks like Danny Devito the barbarian.

That makes me want to create a group of giants based off the characters from "It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia."

"Guys, let's form a bandit tribe! We'll call ourselves "The Pecan Sandys"!

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9128377)
Wood Giant (Voadkyn)

Okay, so I know I said Cloud Giants are the elves of Gianthood and Storm Giants are the Centaurs, but really I suppose the Voadkyn should take either prize. At 9 1/2 feet tall and 700 lbs, they're basically oversized wood elves, complete with silly ears, long bows, and a love of trees.

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Last but not least, Wood Giants have special lower jaws just for grinding up leaves, roots and other vegetation. This should mean, I think, that technically they spend basically every single waking moment eating, like all creatures that live off leaves do.

Voadkyn are another one of those creatures that really shone in the complete book of humanoids. They were one of the few creatures that could be rangers, mages and druids, plus plenty of multiclass options, plus their shapeshifting meant they could sidestep the social and physical problems of being a monster in a normal sized town. And yes, they did carry big bags of seeds and nuts with them so they could spend the whole time chewing. They're one of those monsters who's collection of abilities works really well as a complete package.

noisms

07-19-2008 12:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Phew, last mega-marathon entry for a while over, and a nice easy nonsense monster to be going on with.

Gibberling

I'd love to know which writers wrote which exact entries of the MM. The Gibberlings have such a great opening paragraph:

Quote:

They come screaming, jabbering, and howling out of the night. Dozens, maybe hundreds, of hunchbacked, naked humanoids swarm unceasingly forward, brandishing short swords. They have no thought of safety, subtlety, or strategy, leaving others with no hope of stopping their mass assault. And then, having come and killed, the gibberlings move on randomly back into the night.

The first impression of gibberlings is of a writhing mass of fur and flesh in the distant moonlit darkness. The pandemonium is actually a mass of pale, hunchbacked humanoids, with pointed canine ears, black manes surrounding their hideous, grinning faces. Their eyes are black, and shine with a maniacal gleam. They carry short swords in their overly long arms as they lope ever faster forward.

It's cheesy as hell, but I absolutely adore that kind of stuff. It just suits the atmosphere of AD&D perfectly.

Gibberlings are, essentially, angry humanoid lemmings with a thirst for blood. They come out at night in ravening hordes, rampaging across the countryside and killing everything they come across before disappearing whence they came. If anything the way they are described reminds me a little of the zombies from the 28 [days, weeks] *later* set of films - shrieking lunatics who jibber and jabber and throw themselves around like the monkey from *Braindead*. They're individually pathetic (1 HD), but considering that the players will be encountering 40d10 of the things, that makes them pretty dangerous. (Gibberlings are the minions of 2nd edition, clearly.)

I like the mystery that surrounds the Gibberlings. They appear from subterranean tunnels that nobody has ever been able to find the end of, and have no apparent reason for their raging attacks. And where do they get their short swords from?

If you ask me, Gibberlings are the perfect opportunity for all you creative people to get your brains working and come up with origin stories for the things....

Sleeper

07-19-2008 02:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Plants were okay with birds eating their fruit. Childbirth via bird poop seems somehow fitting. But logging? Not so good. So aeons ago, the plants spawned guardians of their vast forestal fastnesses. Treants.

But nobody ever thought of that other kingdom. Not plant, not animal, but somewhere in between. Primal and apparently unsophisticated. Dwelling in sessile harmony in the deep realms under the earth, their spores dancing around the slow drip of lime deposits that eventually swelled and grew into stactites and stalagmites.

And then came the genocide. Or attempted cladocide. Hordes of scurrying humanoids and other things starting eating their fruiting bodies, and multiplied. So the fungi, in their slow passive way, developed a reaction. An allergy. In those realms of the underdark where humanoids colonize and farm toadstools and lichen, the other branch of opisthokonts take on the appearance and apparent behavior of their animalian cousins. The fungi grow, swell, and fruit. And the spores grow rapidly into an apparent horde of swarming pseudo-hominids. Except, they're not. Humanoid, nor even a horde. In actuality, all that matted hair is mycelia, and strands run from one to the next, connecting them into a single organism. And once ripe, that organism boils across the underdark and sweeps a portion clean of the bipedal infestation. So that, in the moist and still darkness, the fungi can once again spread and grow, free from cultivation.

kami2awa

07-19-2008 05:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9131891)

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If you ask me, Gibberlings are the perfect opportunity for all you creative people to get your brains working and come up with origin stories for the things....

The tunnels never end. The gibberling are born through spontaneous generation in the Earth, and the tunnels are naturally occurring, like veins in the body of a giant. Gibberlings arise when the land becomes ill, like antibodies, caused by some great source of evil in the area. The gibberlings can never been beaten, because they are effectively infinite in number. The only way to stop their invasion is to find and drive out the source of evil.

kelvingreen

07-19-2008 06:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9131891)

If you ask me, Gibberlings are the perfect opportunity for all you creative people to get your brains working and come up with origin stories for the things....

Isn't there a reference somewhere to Gibberlings having no reproductive organs, with the ever-present "sages" pondering how exactly they breed?

Crinos

07-19-2008 06:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9132871)

Isn't there a reference somewhere to Gibberlings having no reproductive organs, with the ever-present "sages" pondering how exactly they breed?

In one of the later MM compendiums (4 I believe) they explained gibberlings as being created by Brood Gibberlings, which are far realm creatures that look like larger gibberlings that injected a little grub into a bitten victim that burrowed into the victims brain and made them turn into a gibberling.

Personally, I thought it was kind of a cop out, but that's the canon explanation I suppose.

Crinos

07-19-2008 06:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Incidentally, after you're done with the MM, you should totally do the MC appendixes 1-3, or the planescape or Ravenloft appendixes.

The MC compendium 1 is cool because all the artwork is done by Deterlizzi (SP?)

(un)reason

07-19-2008 06:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9131891)

I'd love to know which writers wrote which exact entries of the MM. The Gibberlings have such a great opening paragraph:

They're another forgotten realms monster originally, so probably Ed Greenwood again.

Setebos

07-19-2008 08:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9131891)

And where do they get their short swords from?

This.

My explanations, all satisfactory for hordes of mindless land piranhas, are universally stymied by those

goddamn short swords. I'd feel like cheating if gibberlings *usually* carried them, as some of the most common D&D weapons that could be scavenged off all sorts of soldiers and irregular defenders. They *all* have them.

The only obvious solutions make them phantasms conjured by an intelligent mind, which is a huge copout (not to mention already used for giants), or are incredibly silly ("Natural mineral growths that just happen to look exactly like shortswords").

OOH. Or: There's *only one* gibberling, who only happens to be carrying a short sword. He's replicated somehow...it would explain why they don't communicate, breed, or disagree with each other.

He's trapped in a broken Magitech photocopier somewhere deep in the earth (perhaps a machine originally designed to copy slaves, or warriors), Azathoth-like, forced to watch as frothing idiot copies of himself scamper to freedom...The original is surprisingly intelligent, noble even, but his clones are rudimentary at best (*Multiplicity*, or the Simpsons, if you like). They retain a primitive desire to free him, but can only communicate in howls. Inevitably, the frustration and madness of the ordeal drives them to murder.

Naturally, the faux gibberlings are also physically unstable. They disintegrate at the end of the night on the way back into the underground. The PC's will need to display some serious investigative chops to find the source and end the plague.

How did he get there? Was he one of these original slaves, imprisoned in the machine millennia ago (when he looked like a man), before some cataclysm plunged his society into ruin? How can he be freed?

ogier300

07-19-2008 08:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

the "short swords" are shards of cave-stone cracked from their volcanic-obsidian breeding pods, and wielded without regard to the pain and damage they cause to the gibberling's hands.

Hmm. What if gibberlings are the result of Drow work parties?

Sleeper

07-19-2008 08:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9132944)

They're another forgotten realms monster originally, so probably Ed Greenwood again.

Gibberlings appear in the 1E Fiend Folio, so unless Greenwood was going by the pseudonym "Underworld Oracle" and lived in the UK in the late 1970s, they're not originally Forgotten Realms monsters.

noisms

07-19-2008 10:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9132938)

Incidentally, after you're done with the MM, you should totally do the MC appendixes 1-3, or the planescape or Ravenloft appendixes.

The MC compendium 1 is cool because all the artwork is done by Deterlizzi (SP?)

I wouldn't mind giving the Planescape MCs a whirl. But that's getting ahead of ourselves. ;)

noisms

07-19-2008 10:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9132871)

Isn't there a reference somewhere to Gibberlings having no reproductive organs, with the ever-present "sages" pondering how exactly they breed?

Ah, those bloody sages get everywhere, don't they?

I love D&D sages, with their strange mixture of anachronistic scientific rigor and out-of-left field theories.

DMH

07-19-2008 10:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9132927)

In one of the later MM compendiums (4 I believe) they explained gibberlings as being created by Brood Gibberlings, which are far realm creatures that look like larger gibberlings that injected a little grub into a bitten victim that burrowed into the victims brain and made them turn into a gibberling.

Personally, I thought it was kind of a cop out, but that's the canon explanation I suppose.

The brood gibberling is originally from Gates of the Firestorm Peak- the adventure that first described the Far Realm. It isn't a great origin for gibberlings, but at least they tried.

I still want a write up for cloaklers, one that covers what the hell they are and how they interact with each other and other critters and peoples.

Crinos

07-19-2008 10:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9133482)
Ah, those bloody sages get everywhere, don't they?

I love D&D sages, with their strange mixture of anachronistic scientific rigor and out-of-left field theories.

I wonder if anyone ever DMed a campaign based around the adventurers escorting around these sages so they could study all these effed up monsters.

Crinos

07-19-2008 10:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9133523)
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I still want a write up for cloaklers, one that covers what the hell they are and how they interact with each other and other critters and peoples.

Yeah, that was mentioned in the appendix (MC4 was the only one in the lot with the courtesy to list WHERE the monsters came from at the end of the entry. IIRC it even creatures from obscure as hell settings like Red Steel and Alternity)

DMH

07-19-2008 11:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Alternity isn't a setting, it is a rule set. See sig for more information.

And to make this post of value- why are gibberlings only found in temperate forests when aboveground? Never in hills, jungles or plains. Are they sensitive to warm temperatures? Rain forests provide more shade than most temperate forest types, so that can't be the reason. Could they be creations of fey or drow, the latter using them to exterminate the surface elves?

noisms

07-19-2008 11:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9133525)

I wonder if anyone ever DMed a campaign based around the adventurers escorting around these sages so they could study all these effed up monsters.

No, but after reading this post I'm planning one RIGHT NOW.

Crowetron

07-19-2008 11:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9133175)

OOH. Or: There's only one gibberling, who only happens to be carrying a short sword. He's replicated somehow...it would explain why they don't communicate, breed, or disagree with each other.

He's trapped in a broken Magitech photocopier somewhere deep in the earth (perhaps a machine originally designed to copy slaves, or warriors), Azathoth-like, forced to watch as frothing idiot copies of himself scamper to freedom...The original is surprisingly intelligent, noble even, but his clones are rudimentary at best (Multiplicity, or the Simpsons, if you like). They retain a primitive desire to free him, but can only communicate in howls. Inevitably, the frustration and madness of the ordeal drives them to murder.

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How did he get there? Was he one of these original slaves, imprisoned in the machine millennia ago (when he looked like a man), before some cataclysm plunged his society into ruin? How can he be freed?

This is completely awesome, and I am shocked that no one else has commented on this. This is one of those ideas that are obligated by the *universe itself* to be run, because it is so brilliant.

A quest through the Underdark, perhaps even through dens of Beholders or Mind Flayers, to discover the source of the gibberling plague (which is, at best, a very noisy annoyance), and then END IT?

Utterly awesome. I dunno if this is the right thread for such things, but feel free to take a "I'm-going-to-run-that-so-fucking-hard" Point, Setebos.

JRM

07-19-2008 11:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Doesn't the Gibberlings' entry in the 1st edition Fiend Folio say that their language can't be translated with magic like *Comprehend Languages* and that they're so insane it's dangerous to contact their minds telepathically, or am I misremembering? I can't work up the energy to dig out my copy from whatever shelf it's buried.

I like Setebos's suggestion that they're magical clones. Maybe the creation device drew its creative matter from the plane of Limbo, but it failed to collimate out the raw chaos like its designers planned. Since they appear in many lands does the device teleport as well as duplicate the creatures?

That would make them faxed gibberlings, not faux gibberlings.;

demiurge1138

07-19-2008 11:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9133525)

I wonder if anyone ever DMed a campaign based around the adventurers escorting around these sages so they could study all these effed up monsters.

There was fiction. Throughout 2e, and a little into 3e, Johnathon Richard's Ecology articles in Dragon Magazine used as a framing device the Monster Hunters Society. Turns out, most of those sages could take care of themselves pretty well.

g026r

07-19-2008 12:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9133631)

Doesn't the Gibberlings' entry in the 1st edition Fiend Folio say that their language can't be translated with magic like Comprehend Languages and that they're so insane it's dangerous to contact their minds telepathically, or am I misremembering? I can't work up the energy to dig out my copy from whatever shelf it's buried.

Nope. All it says on languages is the following:

"Though they clearly have a primitive means of communicating among themselves, they have no discernible language."

Ratoslov

07-19-2008 12:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

A gibberling's sword is a peculiar device- they're always destined to, at least once in their benighted existance, spill the blood of the innocent.

Not necessarily lethally, but they will, even if you melt it down and re-forge it into something else.

The true nature of the gibberlings is that they are monsters destined to distribute these evil chunks of steel and misery to all the planes; when a Gibberling becomes old, they're sent out from their Prime plane to others in bands to die a

warrior's death at the hands of another village, and bear the evil away from their homes.

Setebos

07-19-2008 01:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9133631)

Since they appear in many lands does the device teleport as well as duplicate the creatures?

Hmm...good question.

If the device was made to replicate soldiers, it may be automatically distributing them to ruined "staging areas" for (it thinks) assignment and processing. Or they're truly faxed, and the specifications of the original creature are transmitted to several manufacturing centers, where the gibberlings are churned out.

Setebos

07-19-2008 01:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9133594)

A quest through the Underdark, perhaps even through dens of Beholders or Mind Flayers, to discover the source of the gibberling plague (which is, at best, a very noisy annoyance), and then END IT?

I don't completely follow this paragraph. Am I being shenanigan'd? The capitals make me suspicious.

Crowetron

07-19-2008 03:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9133885)

I don't completely follow this paragraph. Am I being shenanigan'd? The capitals make me suspicious.

No shenanigans. I simply meant that if the players could track down the Alpha gibberling, they could stop the cloning process (probably by killing the gibberling or trashing the device, or some other wild violence) and therefore wipe the gibberling race off the planet.

They can't reproduce otherwise, and are pretty damn easy to kill, so soon enough, they'd be faint screaming memory.

I probably just didn't phrase my statement properly. And I probably should've used italics ;)

(un)reason

07-19-2008 03:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9133259)

Gibberlings appear in the 1E Fiend Folio, so unless Greenwood was going by the pseudonym "Underworld Oracle" and lived in the UK in the late 1970s, they're not originally Forgotten Realms monsters.

Rightio. I stand corrected. They do appear in the FR boxed set though. Hell, the 2nd ed set introductory module features them, and includes a canon origin for them. (which is a good deal less impressive than the stuff you guys are coming up with. nach)

JRM

07-19-2008 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 9133745)

Nope. All it says on languages is the following:

"Though they clearly have a primitive means of communicating among themselves, they have no discernible language."

Thanks, I must have got them confused with another maniac monster.

JRM

07-19-2008 07:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9133877)

Hmm...good question.

If the device was made to replicate soldiers, it may be automatically distributing them to ruined "staging areas" for (it thinks) assignment and processing. Or they're truly faxed, and the specifications of the original creature are transmitted to several manufacturing centers, where the gibberlings are churned out.

It also explains the crudely bestial nature of these monsters. If they're anything like some fax machines I've seen, they're barely-legible low quality printouts.

Belchion

07-19-2008 07:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9133631)

I like Setebos's suggestion that they're magical clones. Maybe the creation device drew its creative matter from the plane of Limbo, but it failed to collimate out the raw chaos like its designers planned.

Or the original source has been used up and the clone machine took another sample from one of the clones, repeatedly. So, the gibberling is just a copy of the copy of the copy of the copy of... the first prototype for creating goblins! (Or whatever monster you would prefer for that purpose)

Setebos

07-20-2008 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9134432)

Or the original source has been used up and the clone machine took another sample from one of the clones, repeatedly. So, the gibberling is just a copy of the copy of the copy of the copy of... the first prototype for creating goblins! (Or whatever monster you would prefer for that purpose)

Interesting...I hadn't thought of that.

I was hoping to have the original kept alive, so the PC's can actually interact with an emotionally poignant character who's been driven insane by immortality.

However, meeting his copies, especially if several have been made and have decayed in different ways (gibberling strains, as it were), could be just as interesting if not more so. Hmm...

Crinos

07-20-2008 02:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Could just be that a deepspawn once ate a member of a underdark species that went extinct and decided to create a whole mess of them just for the hell of it (complete with swords).

6inTruder

07-20-2008 05:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

At first glance they look kinda shite, what with that whopping single hit-die, but attach any of the origins people are positing here and the Gibberlings are more nasty and devastating than a Tarasque(I'm not looking up that spelling). I mean shit, maybe they reproduce by budding? So that if even one gets away, in a bit you'll have another horde of them razing accross the countryside.

DMH

07-20-2008 07:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Yeah, esp since most humans are zero level a plague of gibberlings can depopulate a nation quickly. If the PCs fail, they have to move or start farming since no one is growing food any more (and their equipment will fail after a while and all the other bad things about being a small group of humans).

Heh, it would be interesting to see crabmen vs gibberlings since both have a huge reproductive capacity.

kelvingreen

07-20-2008 08:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9133482)

Ah, those bloody sages get everywhere, don't they?

I love D&D sages, with their strange mixture of anachronistic scientific rigor and out-of-left field theories.

My favourite bit of sage fluff (!) is from the Demonspawn entry in *Out of the Pit*:

Quote:

Demonspawn do not have eyes... their lack of eyes has led added much weight to the widespread belief among earthly scholars that the souls of living creatures are contained in the eyes (a belief hotly disputed by most blind sages).

Brilliant.

A sage safari would make a decent campaign, I think. Starting off with some apprentice who's going to study kobolds, and ending with an audacious trip to the Abyss to do some close-up examination of a Demon Prince in his natural habitat, so that the apprentice can complete his PhD project.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9135047)

I was hoping to have the original kept alive, so the PC's can actually interact with an emotionally poignant character who's been driven insane by immortality.

I'd be tempted to have the Original Gibberling be some kind of heroic, and ultimately tragic, figure, who stepped into the broken transporter for some noble purpose, only for it to trap him/her inside and chuck out millions of these strange malformed copies. Perhaps the Gibberlings are, in their own mindless and bestial way, trying to achieve that noble purpose, but it just looks like a destructive plague to those who do not know the truth? It would be a combination of the nanotechnology from the *Doctor Who* episode "The Empty Child" and all those early bits of *D&D* gear that never worked properly and did something horrible to whomever used them.

noisms

07-20-2008 10:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9135132)

Could just be that a deepspawn once ate a member of a underdark species that went extinct and decided to create a whole mess of them just for the hell of it (complete with swords).

That definitely works. To make it a genuine big bag, though, the Deepspawn needs some reason for the hateful plague it has unleashed on the world.

Crinos

07-20-2008 12:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9136079)

That definitely works. To make it a genuine big bag, though, the Deepspawn needs some reason for the hateful plague it has unleashed on the world.

Aren't Deepspawn just naturally evil and spiteful anyways?

How's about this? The Gibberling take back whatever they kill to their masters, and nobody ever notices due to the massive amounts of damage.

That way, the Deepspawn gets all the adventurers and monsters and such to expand its repertoire of minions without having to bother with hunting them down itself or waiting for them to show up.

Setebos

07-20-2008 02:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9135850)

It would be a combination of the nanotechnology from the Doctor Who episode "The Empty Child" and all those early bits of D&D gear that never worked properly and did something horrible to whomever used them.

I was definitely getting a heavy "Empty Child" groove off this idea. Quality piece of television, that.

I have to say, though, while I'm posting, that I'm impressed by the elegance and completeness of the deepspawn theory. It's so obvious! I facepalmed vigorously when I read it.

I mean, it's a deepspawn. This is *precisely* its purpose in the universe.

Kakita Kojiro

07-20-2008 04:09 PM

Am I the only one to have thought that the clone-machine-run-amok gibberling backstory makes for an *excellent* opportunity to have the players encounter NPC Nikolai Tesla as an Elf wizard, played by... David Bowie? I mean, how awesome would *that* be.

Crinos

07-20-2008 05:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9136419)

I have to say, though, while I'm posting, that I'm impressed by the elegance and completeness of the deepspawn theory. It's so obvious! I facepalmed vigorously when I read it.

I mean, it's a deepspawn. This is precisely its purpose in the universe.

Well thank you, that's mighty nice to say.

sim_james

07-20-2008 06:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Somewhere underground is one seriously messed-up *decanter of endless water*.

Someone put seamonkeys into the decanter during the enchantment process, and *now* look what's happened.

kelvingreen

07-20-2008 10:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9136656)

Am I the only one to have thought that the clone-machine-run-amok gibberling backstory makes for an excellent opportunity to have the players encounter NPC Nikolai Tesla as an Elf wizard, played by... David Bowie? I mean, how awesome would that be.

You remind me of the babe...

JRM

07-20-2008 11:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9135132)

Could just be that a deepspawn once ate a member of a underdark species that went extinct and decided to create a whole mess of them just for the hell of it (complete with swords).

That solution has possibilities, but there are a couple of problems:

Deepspawn can only spawn living creatures, not inanimate objects, so won't be able to make the swords.

A deepspawn can spawn any prime-material living creature, so why is it only sending Gibberlings rather than a mixture of monsters to create a 'combined arms' army? For that matter, why spawn such a weedy 1 HD monster when there are many others the same size or smaller which are more powerful? It could be spawning an army of Urds (winged kobolds), for example, which have more HD, can fly and just need rocks as weapons.

Of course, since a deepspawn's Chaotic Evil it could just be doing it "for the hell of it", but they're also geniuses, so I'd like their to be some reason it only use Gibberlings in its assault on the surface world.

Hmm... maybe Gibberlings are incredibly fast maturing monsters, and the deepspawn can produce hundreds of mouse-sized 'baby' Gibberlings in one spawning, which grow to full size in a matter of days.

kelvingreen

07-21-2008 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Going back to the broken teleporter idea, perhaps the Deepspawn is "broken" in some way. Perhaps it's been injured, or is diseased, and either isn't in its right mind, or can't use its reproductive abilities properly. As a result, it just continuously generates hundreds of Gibberlings instead of something more useful.

JRM

07-21-2008 01:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9137417)

Going back to the broken teleporter idea, perhaps the Deepspawn is "broken" in some way. Perhaps it's been injured or is diseased, and either isn't in its right mind, or can't use its reproductive abilities properly.

Of those options my favourite is the deepspawn's insane. Its mad, mad I tell you!;)

harleysa

07-21-2008 03:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

One possible plotline for the deepspawn might be this.

Long ago a minor underdark race (the gibberlings) were driven to the brink of extinction by other mightier races and in desperation summoned an extradimensional horror (the deepspawn) to defend them. As per the terms of its contract so long as it defends them it can reside within our dimension. However to prevent the gibberlings from becoming strong enough to be able to stand on their own it sends out hordes of mindless creatures to ravage the other races periodically keeping the true gibberlings in a constant state of war with everyone and thus in constant need of its services. Over time the gibberlings may have even come to worship it as a protector god and could have even have forgotten that they have the power to banish it themselves

Crinos

07-21-2008 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Well thanks Noisms, your thread has made me go out and buy a PDF of the old MM with my last six bucks. I hope you're proud. :D

Now hurry up with the Giff entry dammit! *Shakes fist*

noisms

07-21-2008 11:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by harleysa (Post 9137688)

One possible plotline for the deepspawn might be this.

Long ago a minor underdark race (the gibberlings) were driven to the brink of extinction by other mightier races and in desperation summoned an extradimensional horror (the deepspawn) to defend them. As per the terms of its contract so long as it defends them it can reside within our dimension. However to prevent the gibberlings from

becoming strong enough to be able to stand on their own it sends out hordes of mindless creatures to ravage the other races periodically keeping the true gibberlings in a constant state of war with everyone and thus in constant need of its services. Over time the gibberlings may have even come to worship it as a protector god and could have even have forgoteen that they have the power to banish it themselves

This is my favourite. Constant warfare induced by the Deepspawn has reduced the gibberlings to a shadow of what they once were; barely able to communicate or do anything other than kill and destroy.

noisms

07-21-2008 11:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9137912)

Well thanks Noisms, your thread has made me go out and buy a PDF of the old MM with my last six bucks. I hope you're proud. :D

*Now hurry up with the Giff entry dammit! *Shakes fist**

Now you have to find people to play 2nd edition with... ;)

noisms

07-21-2008 11:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Giff

So, we come to the first (if I remember correctly) of our true Spelljammer natives. The whole Spelljammer phenomenon sort of passed me by, I have to confess, so although I know of it and about it, I never took part in a Spelljammer campaign. Nowadays the material is too hard to get hold of, so I suppose I never will.

The Giff are a race of 9' tall Hippo-men. With Arquebuses. Ah, the 1980s. Militaristic and violent, they hire themselves out as platoons of mercenaries across the multiverses. They don't care who they fight for - the entry says that it could equally be a local gambling den, or an illithid city. That latter idea just seems like D&D at its finest - a *mindflayer city guarded by regiments of Giff*.

I was always struck by the idea of a race of mercenaries. It raises all sorts of questions: How did it end up that an entire species became involved in the same trade, and what were they doing before they became mercenaries? I suppose there is some historical precedent in that at various times in human history certain nations of people have produced large numbers of mercenaries - like the Swiss, the Irish, or the Thracian tribes. But it's not as if the entire population of Switzerland just upped-sticks and became a nation of travelling sellswords during the 16th century. Anyway, best not think about it too deeply, because Giff are cool.

The method of payment for Giff is somewhat...odd. They require only smoke powder (or sometimes weapons generally); seven charges per week. Obviously they need it for their arquebuses. But is that really all you would ask for if you were a Giff? Not even once teency little gold piece?

My favourite plot idea for the Giff would be a mercenary rebellion. Perhaps started by somebody trying to force two

bands of Giff to fight each other. All the Giff fighting on various sides in a war would group together and essentially go apeshit, leaving a trail of destruction across a continent and carving out an empire for themselves.

Crinos

07-21-2008 12:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Technically speaking, the first spelljammer species were the Argos or the Arcane (whichever came first, since they both come from the setting), and although they didn't originate there, Beholders are also a major force in the spelljammer setting.

As for the Giff, I kind of picture them as being friendlier versions of the Judoon or Sontaran from Dr. Who (course, I wasn't into Dr. Who at the time I was into ADnD, more the pity for me).

As for material, I'm sure you can get PDF's of spelljammer at drivethrurpg.com, and probably cheap (most 2nd edition stuff, even the boxed sets, run at about 5 bucks a pop).

David J Prokopetz

07-21-2008 12:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9138800)

The method of payment for Giff is somewhat...odd. They require only smoke powder (or sometimes weapons generally); seven charges per week. Obviously they need it for their arquebuses. But is that really all you would ask for if you were a Giff? Not even once teency little gold piece?

If I recall correctly, thanks to wonky D&D economics, on some worlds smoke powder is literally worth its weight in gold. At least. I imagine they sustain themselves financially by selling the excess smoke powder to the inhabitants of backwater worlds for a tidy profit.

Heh... hippo-man gunpowder pushers. :D

Crinos

07-21-2008 12:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9138756)

Now you have to find people to play 2nd edition with... ;)

Or just convert them to MnM when the new Warriors and warlocks book comes out.

noisms

07-22-2008 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9138870)

If I recall correctly, thanks to wonky D&D economics, on some worlds smoke powder is literally worth its weight in gold. At least. I imagine they sustain themselves financially by selling the excess smoke powder to the inhabitants of backwater worlds for a tidy profit.

Heh... hippo-man gunpowder pushers. :D

A race of inter-planar mercenary gunpowder dealers.

Lugh

07-22-2008 03:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9137162)

You remind me of the babe...

What babe?

The giff also remind me of the Mangalores from Fifth Element, but much more British. I also always took that "entire race of mercenaries" bit with a grain of salt. One explanation I favor is that the only giff in Wildspace are mercenaries. The other giff are all back on their home world, living well off the money made by selling smokepowder back out to the denizens of the phlogiston. Intermediaries are used so that a) no one ever figures out that the giff only charge smokepowder for their services because they are also the sole manufacturer, and b) no one knows where the giff homeworld is, so no one can attack their wives and children.

6inTruder

07-22-2008 04:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wild! I was thinking that the Arcane (or whatever you want to call them) had actually destroyed or completely devastated the Giff homeworld enslaving/subjugating the remaining Giff as their mercenary-bodyguards. Which is also why they are so rare: They only hire themselves out when the Arcane say its okay. (and when both sides have Giff, and those Giff renig because Giff don't fight Giff? Yeah, the Arcane wanted that.)

I also like to imagine the Giff as looking a bit more like those statues of Egyptian gods. Huge! Imposing! Then again, I also like to imagine them in classicly Egyptian dress.

Crinos

07-22-2008 05:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 9140544)
What babe?

Babe with the power.

kelvingreen

07-22-2008 07:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9140698)
Babe with the power.

What power?

I like the idea of the Giff as colonial Brits IN SPACE!!! only hippos. All the Giff you encounter are mercenaries because they're working for the Far Phlogiston Company, which is securing Giff interests out there in wild space. The civilian Giff, the ones you never see, are on the homeworld; they sit around drinking their tea and feeling jolly good about the superiority of the Giff Empire, on which the many suns never set. Retired mercenaries get cushy jobs as ministers in Her Majesty's government, where they get to bluster on about the issues of the day, before retiring to their Giff gentlemen's clubs to drink brandy and reminisce about the days they spent out on the fringes of the Empire, subjugating the natives and having a bally good show of it all, wot wot.

Crinos

07-22-2008 09:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9141068)
What power?

Power of Voodoo!

kami2awa

07-22-2008 09:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9133791)

A gibberling's sword is a peculiar device- they're always destined to, at least once in their benighted existence, spill the blood of the innocent.

Not necessarily lethally, but they will, even if you melt it down and re-forged it into something else.

The true nature of the gibberlings is that they are monsters destined to distribute these evil chunks of steel and misery to all the planes; when a Gibberling becomes old, they're sent out from their Prime plane to others in bands to die a warrior's death at the hands of another village, and bear the evil away from their homes.

Gibberlings are the result of a 1000-year-old curse... on a shortsword. The warrior who picked up the sword was transformed into a gibberling. The sword was intelligent and sought to create more of itself, so forced its owner to forge a new sword with the same properties, which created another gibberling. And so on, until the swords and gibberlings were a plague...

MuscaDomestica

07-22-2008 09:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Thanks to Harvey Birdman it is even harder for me to take a Giff seriously.

Crinos

07-22-2008 09:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 9141528)

Thanks to Harvey Birdman it is even harder for me to take a Giff seriously.

"Excuse me dear boy, did you perchance get that parcel I had shipped to you?"

demiurge1138

07-22-2008 11:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 9141528)
Thanks to Harvey Birdman it is even harder for me to take a Giff seriously.

With the giff, that thing they sent ya is always explosives.

kelvingreen

07-22-2008 05:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9141434)
Power of Voodoo!

Who do?

(Someone's going to put a stop to this soon...)

The *Harvey Birdman* hippo is of course an errant Giff. He's got suitably colonial clothing too. There must be a Spelljammer ship somewhere near those offices.

Crinos

07-22-2008 09:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9142753)
Who do?

(Someone's going to put a stop to this soon...)

The Harvey Birdman hippo is of course an errant Giff. He's got suitably colonial clothing too. There must be a Spelljammer ship somewhere near those offices.

You do!

And he does, remember Harvey was complaining about him parking it over his parking place in one episode.

noisms

07-22-2008 11:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gith

It's interesting, isn't it, that the ugly creatures are almost always evil? You couldn't get a more stereotypically evil monster than the Gith - a hunched, scrawny, gangly reptilian with a permanent slouch and no opposable thumbs. It is ugly and therefore it is BAD. (I was trying to think of examples which buck this trend, and could only come up with Mongrelmen. Of course, there are some good-looking evil creatures, so it doesn't always work the other way around.)

The Gith are actually a good orc-alternative to bring off the substitutes bench. Their jumping ability and their psionic strength gives them a real advantage, although I suppose a lot of people don't have psionics in their campaign. (I'd be interested to know what proportions of this thread's readership are positive, neutral or negative about psionics. I always felt there was a psionic niche that needed to be filled, but unfortunately they filled it with something that wasn't very good or consistent. Magic and psionics interact in very clumsy ways, in particular.) There are also shamans, though, who use priestly magic.

Unfortunately, being orc-alternatives, there isn't much in the way of plot-hooks for the Gith. They're pretty much the definition of a mook monster. I suppose they'd be a decent candidate for a "once world-ruling, now degenerate and fallen, race", but it seems like I've been talking about that rather a lot recently (what with the Cyclops and Jungle Giants and everything).

What else is there to say about the Gith? They'll eat anything, including Thri-Kreen, but apparently the mantis-people don't taste so good. I don't know - I've eaten locust, and it was okay. Mantis can't taste that different, can it?

Crinos

07-22-2008 11:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think the Gith are supposed to be the Orcs of the Dark Sun setting, since they specifically mention using obsidian weapons and Thri-Kreen (which are a playable race in Dark Sun IIRC)

g026r

07-22-2008 11:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9143522)

I think the Gith are supposed to be the Orcs of the Dark Sun setting, since they specifically mention using obsidian weapons and Thri-Kreen (which are a playable race in Dark Sun IIRC)

Yep. This is one of the setting-specific Gith* entries.

If I recall correctly, the next one is Spelljammer-specific.

kelvingreen

07-23-2008 12:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9143137)
You do!

Do what?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9143419)
(I'd be interested to know what proportions of this thread's readership are positive, neutral or negative about psionics. I always felt there was a psionic niche that needed to be filled, but unfortunately they filled it with something that wasn't very good or consistent. Magic and psionics interact in very clumsy ways, in particular.)

I don't mind it in theory, and the addition of psionics makes *D&D*, that most vanilla of fantasy rpgs, actually quite unique and different. However, in practice it's a bolted-on afterthought, and would have been much better served being part of the system from the start.

Sleeper

07-23-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9143419)
[u](I'd be interested to know what proportions of this thread's readership are positive, neutral or negative about psionics. I always felt there was a psionic niche that needed to be filled, but unfortunately they filled it with something that wasn't very good or consistent. Magic and psionics interact in very clumsy ways, in particular.)

I think it works very well as one of the foundations of a non-traditional fantasy setting (crystal armor and githyanki and cross-planes raiding parties, oh my), and it's fine in a cosmopolitan kitchen sink universe where anything goes and the average adventure thinks more like a 20th century humanist than a Roman legionnaire or a Hun (many D&D worlds become this over time). But it's basically modernized magic, and therefore it's a bit anachronistic if I want a setting that hews closer to traditional medieval fantasy or sword & sorcery. "Teleportation" isn't a word or a concept from hoary old legends; while fairy roads or circles fill a similar niche, the practical and thematic gulf is vast.

That ignores the rules wonkiness and poor integration with the magic system that have plagued psionics over the decades, but that's an implementation issue not a conceptual issue.

Crinos

07-23-2008 01:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9143691)
Do what?

Remind me of the babe.

Anyways, I always liked psionics, but I much prefer their use in 3rd edition when they were made more like spells.

JasonK

07-23-2008 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9143771)

I think it works very well as one of the foundations of a non-traditional fantasy setting (crystal armor and githyanki and cross-planes raiding parties, oh my), and it's fine in a cosmopolitan kitchen sink universe where anything goes and the average adventure thinks more like a 20th century humanist than a Roman legionnaire or a Hun (many D&C worlds become this over time). But it's basically modernized magic, and therefore it's a bit anachronistic if I want a setting that hews closer to traditional medieval fantasy or sword & sorcery. "Teleportation" isn't a word or a concept from hoary old legends; while fairy roads or circles fill a similar niche, the practical and thematic gulf is vast.

That ignores the rules wonkiness and poor integration with the magic system that have plagued psionics over the decades, but that's an implementation issue not a conceptual issue.

Except for the middle part ("fine in a cosmopolitan..."), where I think the rules have always gotten in the way, I'm pretty much with Sleeper here. If you're deliberately going non-trad it's a very cool alternative to magic, but if you're sticking closer to actual legendry and myth it's a bit too far out there.

~ jason

Xyxox

07-23-2008 05:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wow, two setting specific creatures from two settings I ran campaigns in, Spelljammer and Dark Sun.

I really went big into Spelljammer and as a consequence it became a money pit since it linked the the major campaign worlds together via the Phlogiston. This was later accomplished by the Planescape setting, too.

Dark Sun was great fun and one of the better settings.

It's too bad the most fun settings all ended up on the 3E cutting room floor. That's what happens when a game suffers from both rules bloat **AND** fluff bloat.

DMH

07-23-2008 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Dark Sun gith would have been better had they not tried to turn them into a degenerate, reptilian version of the githX (I forgot if they are yanki or zerai) in one of the adventures.

As for psionics, I prefer the 2nd edition version, Green Ronin's Psychic Handbook and Alternity's version over the 3rd edition version (spells with another name).

g026r

07-23-2008 06:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9144746)

Dark Sun gith would have been better had they not tried to turn them into a degenerate, reptilian version of the githX (I forgot if they are yanki or zerai) in one of the adventures.

I seem to recall that it's yanki, but I haven't read through any of the adventures in ages.

lkrast

07-23-2008 06:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Psionics bad. If you don't have them, someone who does can overshadow you, at least in early AD&D. If you do have them - I ran into this in a homebrew game system I played in for a few years - the monsters tend to have it better than you, which means you end up with fried brains a lot.

noisms

07-23-2008 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xyxox (Post 9144636)

*It's too bad the most fun settings all ended up on the 3E cutting room floor. That's what happens when a game suffers from both rules bloat **AND** fluff bloat.*

Yeah, I never understood how all the interesting settings (Planescape, Dark Sun, Al Qadim, Spelljammer) went unsupported, while Forgotten Realms (snore) and Dragonlance (pass me the sick bucket) continued to get attention.

Crinos

07-23-2008 03:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9145935)

Yeah, I never understood how all the interesting settings (Planescape, Dark Sun, Al Qadim, Spelljammer) went unsupported, while Forgotten Realms (snore) and Dragonlance (pass me the sick bucket) continued to get attention.

Cause they were the ones supported by big name fantasy authors.

How many Planescape and Spelljammer novels did you see floating around.

Cricket chirps

Yeah, exactly.

Even Ravenloft got ressurected by White Wolf's d20 division (which is oddly appropriate since that was the setting most of the WOD set was attracted too back in the day), hell back when I was in high school it was the most popular system hands down.

noisms

07-23-2008 03:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9146158)

Cause they were the ones supported by big name fantasy authors.

How many Planescape and Spelljammer novels did you see floating around.

Cricket chirps

Yeah, exactly.

That's a whole other question in and of itself. Why *weren't* there any good Planescape or Spelljammer books floating around? It's also kind of off-topic I suppose..

Crinos

07-23-2008 04:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9146213)

That's a whole other question in and of itself. Why weren't there any good Planescape or Spelljammer books floating around? It's also kind of off-topic I suppose..

I dunno, maybe they were just too "out there" for most "conventional" fantasy writers to get into.

I mean Planescape got a kick ass computer game (which, I must admit, I never played), and Spelljammer didn't even get that.

Meanwhile, Forgotten Realms and Dragonlance get ass loads of books because they're conventional fantasy world. And Ravenloft gets picked up by the goth horror Anne Rice set.

Not that there's anything WRONG with those settings, but it kind of sucks they're the ones that get the attention and the philosophical and fantasy sci fi settings get left in the dust,

EDIT: Of course, it could be that, in the case of Planescape, nobody could take writing in cockney sigil speak for the length of a book.

Anyways, Planescape's background was so involved they really didn't NEED novels, especially considering it was pretty much Di Terlizzi's pet project.

Plus, the Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix 3 is the ONLY monstrous compendium that features a monster entry written *from the POV of the monster*.

Crowetron

07-23-2008 04:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

As much as I love the Forgotten Realms setting (it's the damn Dwarves, they rock so hard), I've always been curious about Spelljammer.

Planescape seems interesting, but flying organic/magical ships through the cosmos to fight Space-Beholders sounds like my kinda game. I'm sure there's much more to it than that, but I'm already sold.

Crinos

07-23-2008 04:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9146373)

As much as I love the Forgotten Realms setting (it's the damn Dwarves, they rock so hard), I've always been curious about Spelljammer.

Planescape seems interesting, but flying organic/magical ships through the cosmos to fight Space-Beholders sounds like my kinda game. I'm sure there's much more to it than that, but I'm already sold.

They even had their own form of Daleks: The Clockwork horrors.

Plus Guyver Units.

Crowetron

07-23-2008 05:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Well shit. Now I must play this game. FOREVER.

To Amazon, away!

JohnBiles

07-23-2008 05:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9146373)

As much as I love the Forgotten Realms setting (it's the damn Dwarves, they rock so hard), I've always been curious about Spelljammer.

Planescape seems interesting, but flying organic/magical ships through the cosmos to fight Space-Beholders sounds like my kinda game. I'm sure there's much more to it than that, but I'm already sold.

One of the few campaigns I was ever a player in that lasted over a few months (I've DMed some really long games but played in few long ones) we did some spelljamming which was pretty cool, even though at one point we got mind-controlled by mind flayers who sold us as slaves to a Beholder ship.

(Which lead to one of our coolest campaign moments. Our low wisdom barbarian somehow was the first to throw off the mind control. He had no weapons, but they'd let him keep his Belt of Storm giant strength so he could move heavy objects for them. So he ambushed a beholder by jumping down the big central flight shaft of the ship, landing on its head, ripping off two eyestalks and BEATING IT TO DEATH with them.)

glass

07-23-2008 05:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Damnit, I want to play in a Spelljammer game now. :eek:

glass.

sim_james

07-23-2008 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9146213)

That's a whole other question in and of itself. Why weren't there any good Planescape or Spelljammer books floating around? It's also kind of off-topic I suppose..

Planescape novels suffered from being handed to authors who didn't really grok the setting. Most of the possible authors who *did* have a strong grip on the setting were writing supplements, and for the most part that's what PS fans read instead.

Planescape had five books, if I recall correctly - Pages of Pain, the Blood Wars trilogy, and a Torment tie-in. The best was Pages of Pain... but it was unconventional and somewhat of a departure from the canonical setting. The Blood Wars trilogy was appallingly bad (i.e, about as bad as most FR and DL novels). Torment was basically readable, but not even a fraction as entertaining as the actual game.

Spelljammer had a series (with some kind of silly 90s TSR title like "The Wildspace Quintet" or somesuch). I only caught a couple of them, so I can't give much of a review. They were a bit game-y, unfortunately.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9146316)

Anyways, Planescape's background was so involved they really didn't NEED novels, especially considering it was pretty much Di Terlizzi's pet project.

Plus, the Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix 3 is the ONLY monstrous compendium that features a monster entry written from the POV of the monster.

There was a lot of good reading in Planescape supplements, that for sure.

The Planescape Monstrous Compendiums were extremely entertaining to read. My personal favourite is the Sunfly entry!

noisms

07-23-2008 06:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9146555)

There was a lot of good reading in Planescape supplements, that for sure.

The Planescape Monstrous Compendiums were extremely entertaining to read. My personal favourite is the Sunfly entry!

Yep. After this thread (threads?) is over, I'm toying with the idea of doing a series on the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums.

Malignant Marionette

07-23-2008 09:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9143419)

I'd be interested to know what proportions of this thread's readership are positive, neutral or negative about psionics.

Fluffwise I'm positive, ruleswise I'm neutral. I mean, (using Complete Psionics Handbook) pretty much all psionic powers that affect someone else need to establish contact first. So that regular illithid just tells you to roll your save vs. mindfuck, while the psionic illithid needs to cast Contact and roll their power stat (high but still has a chance to fail), then cast whatever mind-affecting power they want to use, again rolling their power stat which can fail and even after that the target can still roll their saves. And the same deal for any other psionic monster, meaning they're standing there for a round looking silly and trying to establish contact. Good lord if their power stat is lower than 15. And the same thing all over again if they want to psionic up another target.

I suppose smart opponents could establish contact in the middle of a conversation, but it seems lone psionists are totally screwed if attacked before they manage to do that. Of course, I'm not interested in PC psionicists, so any advice on making psionic users kickass will be gladly accepted, if anyone's a bit more experienced with them. I also have Skills & Powers, in case the psionics section in that makes any difference. Didn't get around to reading it, since all the psionics lingo makes me confuzzled. :o

Crinos

07-23-2008 11:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9146424)
Well shit. Now I must play this game. FOREVER.

To Amazon, away!

You should try drivethrurpg.com, you can get pretty much all the speljammer things on PDF for like five bucks a pop.

(un)reason

07-23-2008 11:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9146558)
Yep. After this thread (threads?) is over, I'm toying with the idea of doing a series on the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums.

I hate you so much right now. ;) When I finish this, I am never doing anything like it ever again. (unless I'm getting paid for it.) It just eats up so much time and energy.

Belchion

07-24-2008 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9146316)

I mean Planescape got a kick ass computer game (which, I must admit, I never played), and Spelljammer didn't even get that.

Well, but Spelljammer got a computer game where you could miss the plot:

Quote:

Originally Posted by <http://www.the-underdogs.info/game.php?id=3094>

Spelljammer suffers from a limited plotline... a VERY limited plotline. In fact, you may miss the fact that there is one at all.

noisms

07-24-2008 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9147260)

I hate you so much right now. ;) When I finish this, I am never doing anything like it ever again. (unless I'm getting paid for it.) It just eats up so much time and energy.

I find that if I can keep the momentum of one entry approximately every 24 hours going, it's not too bad. I think if I missed two days in a row, I'd grind to a halt. And if I tried to do more, I'd burn out.

I'm lucky that my job involves me sitting at the computer for quite long periods doing nothing much.

EDIT: Also, Dragon magazine is a different beast to monster entries. The MM really lends itself to this sort of thing. Dragon really doesn't!

(un)reason

07-24-2008 02:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9147536)

I find that if I can keep the momentum of one entry approximately every 24 hours going, it's not too bad. I think if I missed two days in a row, I'd grind to a halt. And if I tried to do more, I'd burn out.

I'm lucky that my job involves me sitting at the computer for quite long periods doing nothing much.

EDIT: Also, Dragon magazine is a different beast to monster entries. The MM really lends itself to this sort of thing. Dragon really doesn't!

Yeah. Reading and summarising 1 page per day compared to 80+ pages every 2-3 days is a very different workload. It's my own fault really.

Sleeper

07-24-2008 03:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9147908)

Yeah. Reading and summarising 1 page per day compared to 80+ pages every 2-3 days is a very different workload. It's my own fault really.

Don't worry, you're almost there. Only 309 print issues and 6 annuals to go :)

Also, I think your thread's suffering an attention deficit because relatively few people have copies of the oldest issues. You're into the 1980s now, and the number of readers who can follow along or reminisce should start increasing.

(un)reason

07-24-2008 10:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9147977)

Don't worry, you're almost there. Only 309 print issues and 6 annuals to go :)

Also, I think your thread's suffering an attention deficit because relatively few people have copies of the oldest issues. You're into the 1980s now, and the number of readers who can follow along or reminisce should start increasing.

A bit of cross-forum promo work to get the attention of people on places like ENworld and dragonsfoot would probably be a good idea. But I am loathe to sign up to forums just to say, hey, look at what I'm doing. Seems rather like spamming. And being banned does not appeal.

noisms

07-24-2008 11:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gith, Pirate

This entry all revolves around Spelljammer, so it's full of stuff that goes way over my head. Take this sentence, for instance: *These inherent abilities also enable the pirates to pilot ships with series helms. These abilities function only in wildspace, not in the phlogiston.* Rather than just bandy around terms like "series helms", "phlogiston" and "wildspace" which I know nothing about, I'll concentrate on the meat and bones of things.

Pirate Gith are a tertiary branch of the Githyanki/Githzerai axis, although in appearance they look like Githyanki. (Was it ever explained why Githyanki and Githzerai look so different? I forget, and I can't be bothered reading the entries to find out, just yet.) Whereas Githyanki live in the Astral Plane and Githzerai live in Limbo (I understand those), Pirate Gith live in "arcane space" (I don't understand that), where they fly around in ships trying to catch other ships and generally being pirates and stuff. They live a strict militaristic lifestyle and have a clearly defined hierarchy in their asteroid homes, and think nothing of committing genocide (!) if other races try to settle nearby.

As a non-Spelljammerist, I think I'd be more tempted to use Pirate Gith as actual pirates on the high seas. Perhaps I would hand wave their existence away, if pressed, as the descendants of a group of Pirate Gith from "arcane space" who somehow ended up in the campaign world. Ever since then they have gradually prospered and proliferated until now they are the scourge of the seven seas. Can YOU take on....*The Fell Fleet of the Pirate Gith!!!??*

There's a lot of stuff about how Pirate Gith like Elven ships, although I'm not sure why. This entry is also notable for having just about the shortest Ecology section ever: "The Gith pirates are carnivores, pure and simple. They do not care what state, short of putrefied, the meat is in. Some of the pirate bands also engage in cannibalism." Yep, so much for mating rituals, gestation periods and stats for children and females.

Crinos

07-24-2008 11:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Basic rundown of spelljammer terms:

Helms: Basically the things that turn normal ships into spelljammer ships: IIRC they're magic thrones that you sit in that make the ship your in go into space.

Wildspace: Basically Outer Space.

Phlogiston: In the Spelljammer cosmology, each universe is contained in a "crystal sphere" which floats around in this weird smoky stuff called phlogiston. (each crystal sphere containing a different world: One for Toril, one for Krynn, Athas, Oerth, etc.)

Also, IIRC: Elvish Spelljammer ships tend to resemble insects.

I'll be able to explain it better once I get a job and buy the spelljammer boxed set and the appropriate supplements. (although my first buy will be the planescape stuff)

demiurge1138

07-24-2008 03:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Arcane space literally means, I think, the areas of space dominated by the arcanes (all the way from the beginning of the book). Frankly, I'd just use githyanki and put 'em on a pirate ship.

JohnBiles

07-24-2008 04:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9149707)

Gith, Pirate

Pirate Gith are a tertiary branch of the Githyanki/Githzerai axis, although in appearance they look like Githyanki. (Was it ever explained why Githyanki and Githzerai look so different? I forget, and I can't be bothered reading the entries to find out, just yet.) Whereas Githyanki live in the Astral Plane and Githzerai live in Limbo (I understand those), Pirate Gith live in "arcane space" (I don't understand that), where they fly around in ships trying to catch other ships and generally being pirates and stuff. They live a strict militaristic lifestyle and have a clearly defined heirarchy in their asteroid homes, and think nothing of committing genocide (!) if other races try to settle nearby.

A very brief set of notes on spelljammer cosmology: In Spelljammer, each of the major 2E settings was inside a crystal sphere which shielded it from the great ocean of phlostigon which floats in Arcane Space between the crystal spheres. You could use spelljammer ships to fly around inside Crystal Spheres, but you could also head into Arcane space to cruise between game worlds.

So Gith Pirates lived out there in the phlostigon.

As for different appearance, I assumed the Githyanki altered their appearance as part of some move to better adapt to living in the Astral Plane.

Wakboth

07-24-2008 05:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9149707)

(Was it ever explained why Githyanki and Githzerai look so different? I forget, and I can't be bothered reading the entries to find out, just yet.)

I always assumed that living in the Astral Plane wasn't good for the 'yanki.

Crinos

07-25-2008 12:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9150504)

I always assumed that living in the Astral Plane wasn't good for the 'yanki.

I think it has to do with the way they age. Since time does not pass on the Astral, The Githyanki have to leave the Astral in order to age, and then the accumulated age comes in all at once.

So instead of aging naturally over time, they age in short bursts. Not cool.

Sleeper

07-25-2008 12:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9151255)

I think it has to do with the way they age. Since time does not pass on the Astral, The Githyanki have to leave the Astral in order to age, and then the accumulated age comes in all at once.

So instead of aging naturally over time, they age in short bursts. Not cool.

I always assumed it had more to do with the zero-gravity environment of the astral.

DMH

07-25-2008 01:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

So you 3 are saying that Limbo is better on the body than the Astral plane?

Mortality

07-25-2008 01:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9151455)

So you 3 are saying that Limbo is better on the body than the Astral plane?

Limbo? It's just a bit brisk.

Good for the skin, you know. Invigorating, even.

Except for the times when the air turns to intelligent acid and tries to eat you but let's not mention that, eh?

Crinos

07-25-2008 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9151455)

So you 3 are saying that Limbo is better on the body than the Astral plane?

Considering that most Githyanki look like yellow lizard mummies and Githzerai look like relatively normal humans with reptilian eyes, then yes.

I mean, just look at the cover of the 1e fiend folio:

http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3034/...54dacbe8_o.jpg

I mean just LOOK at him! Skull like face, unhealthy yellow skin, bandaged arms and legs with folds of skin hanging out like he was originally 500 pounds and he just got liposuction. That s NOT a good look. Hell, if you didn't know any better, you'd probably assume that they're undead.

Heck, that's probably it: The Lich Queen probably modified the Githyanki so that they would look like this out of vanity. I mean we already know she eats all her most powerful subjects, so its not that much of a stretch.

Hellzon

07-25-2008 02:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And in 4e, the Gith* have evolved towards looking almost exactly the same, except yanki are still yellow and zerai are green.

The artist even used the same three models when drawing the two races. Nice touch.

kelvingreen

07-25-2008 02:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 9151735)

And in 4e, the Gith have evolved towards looking almost exactly the same, except yanki are still yellow and zerai are green.*

They've also got Spangly Disco Armour! Many fear the cruelty of the Githyanki, but the truly sensible adventurer fears the Gith's love of bling!

I can't stand that chuck-a-picture-of-my-mate-through-Photoshop stuff. Give me a pen and wash DiTerlizzi Githzerai anyway,

Crinos

07-25-2008 03:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9151811)

They've also got Spangly Disco Armour! Many fear the cruelty of the Githyanki, but the truly sensible adventurer fears the Gith's love of bling!

I can't stand that chuck-a-picture-of-my-mate-through-Photoshop stuff. Give me a pen and wash DiTerlizzi Githzerai anyway,

As far as I'm concerned, they should have done what they did for the MM Appendix 1 and planescape and use DiTerlizzi for ALL their monster manual artwork

kelvingreen

07-25-2008 03:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

No arguments there.

Sleeper

07-25-2008 03:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The githyanki are pirates. Their wasted bodies are the result of a life of flamboyant danger and dissipation, of squalor and hardship and bad personal hygiene. Their limbs are festooned with the gaudy and fantastic loot from a thousand worlds, arrayed in a screaming panoply of bad taste. In many ways, they're the aging rockers of the D&D setting; what Keith Richards would become if he held onto a frail thread of life for thousands upon thousands of years. And had a bigass glowing silver sword.

The githzerai are ninja. Their lean bodies are the result of a lifetime of asceticism, obedience, and dedication to personal perfection. Muscles as spare and firm as adamantite, and a bare and minimalistic style evinced by a simple robe, sandals, and a bare cell to sleep in.

Crinos

07-25-2008 03:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9151995)

what Keith Richards would become if he held onto a frail thread of life for thousands upon thousands of years. And had a bigass glowing silver sword.

or What Mick Jagger would become if he had a bigass glowing silver sword.

Sleeper

07-25-2008 04:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9152027)
or What Mick Jagger would become if he had a bigass glowing silver sword.

[Except I don't think Mick Jagger snorted his dad's ashes](#), which is strangely appropriate for a bunch of Jack Sparrows who worship a desiccated but strangely-well preserved wannabe goddess.

Crinos

07-25-2008 04:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9152096)
Except I don't think Mick Jagger snorted his dad's ashes, which is strangely appropriate for a bunch of Jack Sparrows who worship a desiccated but strangely-well preserved wannabe goddess.

On that subject, was the lich queen ever give stats at all?

g026r

07-25-2008 04:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9152209)
On that subject, was the lich queen ever give stats at all?

According to Wikipedia, they'd be in [Dungeon #100: The Lich Queen's Beloved](#).

Sleeper

07-25-2008 04:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9152209)
On that subject, was the lich queen ever give stats at all?

Of course. This is D&D, after all. If it doesn't have stats and you can't kill it, it doesn't exist. "The Lich-Queen's Beloved" adventure in *Dungeon* magazine #100 statted her out for 3E (githyanki lich wizard 25). However I don't know about 2E, or if there was anything more than "24th-level of magic-use or higher" in 1E.

JRM

07-25-2008 04:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9152209)
On that subject, was the lich queen ever give stats at all?

Yes, she's statted up in the *Dungeon* #100 mega-adventure "The Lich-Queen's Beloved".

EDIT: Oh well, not fast enough to the keyboard. Anyhows, as far as I know *Dungeon* #100 is the first time she got a full write-up.

see

07-25-2008 05:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

"Arcane Space" simply means "the Spelljammer setting".

[One of the two Spelljammer boxed set books is the "Concordance of Arcane Space". The first chapter in said book is titled "Arcane Space". Said chapter covers the subjects of celestial bodies, wildspace (the type of space that's vacuum, inside crystal spheres), Spelljammer's gravity rules, spelljamming helms, how crystal spheres work, the phlogistion (the type of space filled with an explosively flammable gs, outside of crystal spheres), breathing and air rules, temperature, and time.]

glass

07-25-2008 06:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9151995)
The githyanki are pirates. Their wasted bodies are the result of a life of flamboyant danger and dissipation, of squalor and hardship and bad personal hygiene.

'In the morning, we'll dance the hempin jig
'so lift up your pint of rum and take another swig
'the curse of Captain Morgan has lead us to this fate
'so have no fear & don't look back; the afterlife awaits!'

glass.

noisms

07-25-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wow, I turn around for five minutes and you've already produced two pages of stuff on my next two entries!

Githyanki coming up shortly...

sim_james

07-25-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9151995)

In many ways, they're the aging rockers of the D&D setting; what Keith Richards would become if he held onto a frai thread of life for thousands upon thousands of years. And had a bigass glowing silver sword.

Holy crap. Githyanki as the Rolling Stones; if *ever* I run D&D/Planescape again, *that's* going to make it in.

noisms

07-26-2008 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Githyanki and Githzerai

I'm doing these as one entry. So sue me! It's with these sort of races - the stalwart icons of the D&D game - that you really struggle to come up with something interesting or new to say. As with orcs, elves, dragons, trolls, beholders, etc., the Gith* are races that pretty much everyone uses and everyone is familiar with. So this is just a retread of very familiar territory.

The first thing to be said is that both races get entries in the first Planescape Monstrous Compendium, and they're big improvements. Firstly, the art was done by Diterlizzi (a familiar theme recurs....), and secondly the production values were second to none; they are beautiful spreads to look at. The MM versions just aren't. (The Githzerai picture is, I think, a candidate for the worst in the book. It manages to combine a complete lack of understanding of composition with horribly poor execution and terrible production - at least in my copy, the picture itself is slightly blurred and faded. The Githyanki isn't much better - it looks like a skeletal monkey pirate with a two-handed sword.)

The second thing to be said is that Githzerai and Githyanki are just really cool ideas. (I heard that actually George R. R. Martin came up with the Githyanki - yet another case where TSR and WotC have appropriated IP they had no right to, like the Displacer Beast). What I liked most about them as a kid, and what I still like about them now, is that they hint

at a whole other level of stuff going on in the background to a standard D&D campaign. You're adventuring in some prime material world which is massive in and of itself. And you might rise to become a great hero in that world. But then suddenly, BLAM! Interplanar war! Mighty humanoids from the far reaches of the infinite multiverse! Scrawny yellow freaks riding red dragons!

The third thing is that I really like the cheesy back story. Slave rebellion? Lich queens? Mindflayers? It's silly as anything, but brilliant fun.

The fourth thing is that Rakkma bands are a great idea. Gangs of Githzerai travelling the planes to hunt Illithids? Yes, please.

The ecology section for the Githzerai has it that: "Although man and githzerai are not natural enemies, battles are frequently fought between the two races, due in part to some humans' desire to capture a live githzerai for study. To date, no such creature has been secured." Sadly, the ever-present 'sages' don't get a mention. But I definitely want to make catching a live Githzerai part of my "monster-hunting sages" campaign.

So how often do you use the Gith*, and how?

demiurge1138

07-26-2008 01:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Not George R. R. Martin. Both the githyanki and githzerai were written by Charles Stross for White Dwarf Magazine and the Fiend Folio, as were the slaadi.

I used githyanki once, briefly, a long time ago, so long ago that I forgot until just now. The party went to the githyanki capital, Tu'nurath, in order to track down an ancient Tarterian dragon who had something they wanted--the sword that killed the god the city was now built on (that the githyanki use dead astral gods as building materials? Love that). In order to gain permission to set foot in the caverns beneath Tu'nurath, they had to secure audience with the Lich Queen herself and bribe and flatter her sufficiently to be allowed. Roleplaying Vlaakith was good fun.

I've never used githzerai as NPCs, but I have seen one as a PC once. A very strange githzerai PC... he thought that humans were the males and elves the females of the same species.

You know what's really weird about githyanki? They lay eggs! I guess this makes a certain amount of sense--the Astral Plane is timeless, so a pregnancy will just last forever and get in the way of savage warrioring. If I ever use the githyanki again, this is what I want to capitalize on: a hidden nursery, where the githyanki mate, lay eggs and rear their children to adulthood, attended by githyanki who are no longer optimal warriors. Ooh! Maybe a red dragon incubates the eggs, and thinks of them as his treasure!

And why, with the glut of half-dragons in 3e, did we never see half red dragon githyanki? That actually makes sense, flavorfully. Mad, vicious shock troopers, used as a suicide squad by the uncaring lich queen.

g026r

07-26-2008 01:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9155498)

Not George R. R. Martin. Both the githyanki and githzerai were written by Charles Stross for White Dwarf Magazine and the Fiend Folio, as were the slaadi.

The name of the Githyanki is lifted from Martin though.

There's an interview with Stross that has more information on the creation of them: http://www.sevendead.com/?page_id=12

Sleeper

07-26-2008 02:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9155449)

The Githyanki isn't much better - it looks like a skeletal monkey pirate with a two-handed sword.)

You say that like it's a *bad* thing. :)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9155449)

The second thing to be said is that Githzerai and Githyanki are just really cool ideas. (I heard that actually George R. R. Martin came up with the Githyanki - yet another case where TSR and WotC have appropriated IP they had no right to, like the Displacer Beast).

Aside from the name, I'd be interested to know how similar Martin's version is to Stross'. The soulsuckers apparently just show up in the back story and never actually appear in *A Dying of the Light*. There's a tendency these days to cry "thief" if there's even the slightest resemblance between two creative works, which is kind of silly because all creative endeavors build upon what came before. It takes more than a superficial similarity or simply drawing inspiration from an earlier work for it to qualify as theft. After all, we don't say modern writers are stealing from Chaucer because the poet influenced the development of the modern English language.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9155449)

The third thing is that I really like the cheesy back story. Slave rebellion? Lich queens? Mindflayers? It's silly as anything, but brilliant fun.

That part's apparently inspired by Niven's *World of Ptavvs* (this is also covered in [the interview with Charles Stross](#)). And that's clearly just inspiration; I would have never made the connection without reading about it.

The Githyanki were also really cool in the "Ecology of the Mind Flayer" article in *Dragon* #78.

Brandi

07-26-2008 02:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9155498)
Both the githyanki and githzerai were written by Charles Stross

Charles "Accelerando" Stross?

Sleeper

07-26-2008 02:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9155610)
Charles "Accelerando" Stross?

Yes.

noisms

07-26-2008 10:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9155587)
There's a tendency these days to cry "thief" if there's even the slightest resemblance between two creative works, which is kind of silly because all creative endeavors build upon what came before. It takes more than a superficial similarity or simply drawing inspiration from an earlier work for it to qualify as theft.

Yeah, but it's a bit rich for WotC to claim the Githyanki as their own IP. For the very reason you cite. As with the Displacer Beast.

Brandi

07-26-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9155623)
Yes.

Huh. (For the record, Accelerando didn't give me the best initial impression of the guy, but that has nothing to do with this.)

Wakboth

07-26-2008 04:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9157789)

Huh. (For the record, Accelerando didn't give me the best initial impression of the guy, but that has nothing to do with this.)

He also came up with the Slaadi and the Death Knight, if memory serves. *And* he's a kick-ass SF writer, too! :)

shirosan

07-26-2008 06:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9155449)

The Githzerai picture is, I think, a candidate for the worst in the book. It manages to combine a complete lack of understanding of composition with horribly poor execution and terrible production - at least in my copy, the picture itself is slightly blurred and faded.

Well, no surprise there, as I see it's an illustration by Thomas Baxa, whose work used to drive me and my friend up the wall. On the other hand, I now feel a slight twinge of pity for him, as he had to share illustration duties with Brom in the first Dark Sun boxed set, and anyone is going to look weak next to that. But yeah, the name of Baxa was practically an epithet for us back in the early 90s. We were a couple of young aesthetes. :cool:

Zartes

07-26-2008 07:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by shirosan (Post 9158556)

Well, no surprise there, as I see it's an illustration by Thomas Baxa, whose work used to drive me and my friend up the wall. On the other hand, I now feel a slight twinge of pity for him, as he had to share illustration duties with Brom in the first Dark Sun boxed set, and anyone is going to look weak next to that. But yeah, the name of Baxa was practically an epithet for us back in the early 90s. We were a couple of young aesthetes. :cool:

I think I just got inspiration for an alien swearword for my next scifi campaign... :D

Wakboth

07-26-2008 07:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Baxa isn't my favorite by any means, but I've heard the colorization in MM screwed his pics; they work much better in B&W.

Naxuul

07-27-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9158595)

Baxa isn't my favorite by any means, but I've heard the colorization in MM screwed his pics; they work much better in B&W.

I've seen his B&W pics.

They still look alot like kindergarten scribbles.

-Naxuul

Brandi

07-27-2008 02:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Baxa's art for the Ravenloft MM supplements was-- okay. Not great, and a few were real clinkers (the halfling vampire, though 2nd edition hobbit-style halflings are going to be a hard sell as scary monsters), but still better than the art for Islands of Terror.

sim_james

07-27-2008 07:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I ran Planescape in 2nd (and 3e for awhile) so yeah, Gith* got a fair bit of use. If you need a planar race that can range in power from ordinary mortal to dragonkillers, gith* are a good option.

I'm used to githzerai as NPCs rather than PCs, though.

noisms

07-28-2008 09:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gloomwing

I've never used a Gloomwing in a game. But looking over the entry, I'm surprised to find that they're actually quite a fun monster.

Essentially a big (8') moth, Gloomwings swoop in from the night to attack, *confusing* their enemies with shimmering wings and emitting *weakness*-causing pheromones which summon more of their kind. They can also carry off smaller creatures (those annoying halflings and gnomes) and fly them away to certain doom. Their young - caterpillars called "Tenebrous Worms" are ferocious predators, armed with toxic mandibles.

In many ways the Gloomwing is almost the Quintessential 2nd Edition Creature. It causes annoying, debilitating effects (*confusion* and *weakness*). It has a shedload of exception-based rules (they are 50% undetectable in darkness, twilight or moonlight; there is a 20% chance per turn of them being able to summon more of their kind; the chance of an attacker being poisoned by the Tenebrous Worms' bristles is 10% times AC....etc.). It has an insta-kill attack. (The Tenebrous Worms' bristles cause paralysis and then death on a failed save.) It has a superfluous but pleasantly grotesque Ecology bit. ("Gloomwing moths live only 4-9 (1d6+3) weeks. During this time they search for mates and eat voraciously. Egg-laden females (½ chance) use corpses of small sized or larger creatures as incubators for their eggs. The eggs hatch in 12 days, sprouting 1d6+4 small tenebrous worms. The corpse cannot be resurrected unless the infestation is removed with a cure disease spell first. Unless killed, the young worms completely devour the body when they emerge.") It checks pretty much all the boxes.

Gloomwings would be a very nasty foe for a halfling or a gnome. Being carried off, killed, and used for egg-incubation would not only spell death, but *permanent* death. It would be a fun side adventure for such an unfortunate's friends, having to track the Gloomwing across the Plane of Shadow to its nest, hoping to get there in time before the eggs hatch...

JRM

07-29-2008 03:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9164620)

Gloomwing

They can also carry off smaller creatures (those annoying halflings and gnomes) and fly them away to certain doom.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, it can sure suck to be a gnome or halfling in D&D. There are so many monsters with special attacks that only affect smaller than man-size characters. At least in AD&D they have normal human movement, so they didn't have to worry so much about the "you don't need to outrun the owlbear, just the slowest party member".

noisms

07-29-2008 12:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9165867)

I've said it before and I'll say it again, it can sure suck to be a gnome or halfling in D&D. There are so many monsters with special attacks that only affect smaller than man-size characters. At least in AD&D they have normal human movement, so they didn't have to worry so much about the "you don't need to outrun the owlbear, just the slowest party member".

The bonus is that if anybody ever decides to play a kender character, it's really easy to kill them off.

Crinos

07-29-2008 02:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9168030)

The bonus is that if anybody ever decides to play a kender character, it's really easy to kill them off.

I read on wikipedia today that Kender were meant to be the dragonlance equivalent of Halflings.

I personally never saw the kender hate, I think they're adorable.

noisms

07-29-2008 03:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9168265)

I read on wikipedia today that Kender were meant to be the dragonlance equivalent of Halflings.

I personally never saw the kender hate, I think they're adorable.

Get thee behind me, Satan! ;)

I think Kender *can* be played well, i.e. as sort of super-innocent and fearless halflings. But more often than not "Kender" just ends up meaning "License to annoy the other players". It all depends on the player, and most players in my experience usually give in to the temptation to be irritating.

kelvingreen

07-29-2008 05:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9168265)

I personally never saw the kender hate, I think they're adorable.

Where's the RPGnet charter, because I think Crinos just violated it! ;)

Setebos

07-30-2008 12:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9164620)

It would be a fun side adventure for such an unfortunate's friends, having to track the Gloomwing across the Plane c Shadow to its nest, hoping to get there in time before the eggs hatch...

Ah, but can the eggs be extracted and sold? Valuable squishy bits. That's all it's missing (that or the fearsome regalia that is (are?) Moth Armor).

noisms

07-30-2008 12:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Setebos (Post 9169812)

Ah, but can the eggs be extracted and sold? Valuable squishy bits. That's all it's missing (that or the fearsome regalic that is (are?) Moth Armor).

Yep, the eggs are worth 1,000-3,000 gps each, I think. (I don't have the book on me right now.)

No armour rules are provided, but I'm sure it could be statted up... ;)

Crinos

07-30-2008 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9169832)

Yep, the eggs are worth 1,000-3,000 gps each, I think. (I don't have the book on me right now.)

No armour rules are provided, but I'm sure it could be statted up... ;)

How do you make armor out a giant moth?

Me? I'd make a bitching cloak out of its wings. That'd be sweet, flying around with a gloomwing cloak, Like I was the bastard son of David Bowie and Meatloaf.

kelvingreen

07-30-2008 03:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9169961)
How do you make armor out a giant moth?

Me? I'd make a bitching cloak out of its wings. That'd be sweet, flying around with a gloomwing cloak, Like I was the bastard son of David Bowie and Meatloaf.

Crinos wins.

noisms

07-30-2008 12:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gnoll

Hooray!

I like Gnolls. A lot. I think they were always my favourite humanoid enemy monster, and so much of it is down to the artwork.

I mean, just look at this guy:

<http://www.bajasafaris.com/padnd/images/mm2/gnoll.gif>

Is he not the best picture of a Gnoll there has ever been?

As I've said before, though, it's hard finding things to say about the really iconic and generic monsters. So you're going to say it for me. Tell us of the Gnollish goodness in your campaigns.

David J Prokopetz

07-30-2008 12:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9172933)
As I've said before, though, it's hard finding things to say about the really iconic and generic monsters. So you're going to say it for me.

What, not even a comment on 2E's tendency to create completely new subspecies of standard humanoids to serve as "elites" rather than just providing some guidelines for "levelling up" the existing critter?

(Or the fact that, if the description is taken at face value, flinds evidently wield nunchuks? :D)

Zartes

07-30-2008 12:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I always wanted to invent a chocolate bar called a "flind bar" :D

Sleeper

07-30-2008 01:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I always loved gnolls. Gangly, rangy, opportunistic scavengers. No so much evil in the minion of a dark power sense, as lazy and selfish and raucous. Their barking howls carry from the tents and campfires far across the sweltering air of the arid plains. In the shadows between the great bonfires, goblin and halfling and dwarf and elf slaves futilely scamper away from the laughs and kicks of the great bullies. The number of captives swell as hooting bands of gnolls lope back into camp, with small terrified bundles over their shoulders. Inevitably, the raids slow as the gnolls grow fat and luxuriate in the surfeit of menial workers, until their masters' casual inattentance and nightly drunken stupors allow the slaves to escape, and the cycle begins again. In the fringes, emaciated ghouls haunt the pits and piles of waste that surround the disorderly huts, like a train of camp followers lured by the copious and pungent leavings.

The original ghul was a creature of smoke and fire, a ravaging spirit of the wastes. I always wanted to run a campaign where one of the two or three greatest sorcerers of the age was a gnoll, known as the Ravaging Wind. The dry hot wind, that rises in the night and scours the lights of civilization from the land is a lank and shaggy beast. As terrifying as Jezda, the great bone mother of the northern forests.

Sleeper

07-30-2008 01:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9172964)

What, not even a comment on 2E's tendency to create completely new subspecies of standard humanoids to serve a "elites" rather than just providing some guidelines for "levelling up" the existing critter?

(Or the fact that, if the description is taken at face value, flinds evidently wield nunchuks? :D)

Once again, the 2nd edition is credited with 1st edition oddness. I sometimes think that the source of all that's strange and weird in D&D is the original *Fiend Folio*. :)

demiurge1138

07-30-2008 01:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I just don't get flinds. Why do bigger, badder gnolls get their own species name? And why do they use nunchuks?

Sleeper

07-30-2008 01:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9173142)

I just don't get flinds. Why do bigger, badder gnolls get their own species name? And why do they use nunchuks?

For some reason, my brain is trying to connect it to the image of the flail snail, on the opposite page of the *Fiend Folio*. Gnolls supremacists with nunchuks seem like a logical counter for an infestation of gastropods with spinning clubs for heads.

There must have been something in the water in late 1970s Britain.

Crinos

07-30-2008 02:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9173142)

I just don't get flinds. Why do bigger, badder gnolls get their own species name? And why do they use nunchuks?

Probably the same reason there are so many subspecies of dwarves, Gnomes, Goblins, Giants and Elves.

Me? I can't wait till we get to the golems, those have always been my favorites.

Also, I got a job that I'm starting in a week and a half or so, so I'll finally have money to buy some old MM's.

I may just do a "lets read" of the Mystara appendix in celebration, seeing as it was one of my all time favorites.

g026r

07-30-2008 02:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9173281)

I may just do a "lets read" of the Mystara appendix in celebration, seeing as it was one of my all time favorites.

I just received my recently purchased copy in the mail today. Flipping through it, it's certainly different.

If I can ever convince my players to play in 1 2e game, I may have to dig it out just to through some unexpected/unknown creatures at them.

Crinos

07-30-2008 02:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 9173351)

I just received my recently purchased copy in the mail today. Flipping through it, it's certainly different.

If I can ever convince my players to play in 1 2e game, I may have to dig it out just to through some unexpected/unknown creatures at them.

Well I've found out recently that its just more economically feasible for me to get them in PDF format.

Celisasu

07-30-2008 03:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Maybe Flinds were created during the "Ninja are cool!" era? Hence nunchucks?

Obviously Flinds are gnoll ninja. But gnolls being...well gnolls never really grasped the black pajamas or throwing stars(why throw little metal blades when you can throw bigger stuff?) just decided they liked nunchucks instead.

JasonK

07-30-2008 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I have a problem with gnolls, in that they're cool but not actually what I want them to be. I wasn't much looking for hyena-men in my D&D. I wanted them, really wanted them, to be Wolf-men. Like Palladium Fantasy's Wolfen.

That's in standard D&D, of course. In an al Qadim / Arabian Nights-esque setting, of the sort Sleeper's writing about, there I could seriously get behind the ghul-binding dogs of the plains... :)

~ jason

YojimboC

07-31-2008 04:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The thing about gnolls is... well, I never really had a thing for gnolls. I mean, what is that they can do that orcs or goblins (even the heavy lifting goblins, hobs and bugbears) can't do?

I do remember that either the Scarlet Brotherhood or the Red Wizards of Thay (or both) employed gnolls as guards/cannon fodder/thugs. And the Northern Reaches supplement for Mystara put gnolls in the hills as the primary humanoid antagonists, because although trolls would have been more thematically appropriate, the regenerating bastards were just too dangerous to be so common a threat.

I do like flinds and their flind bars, though. *Fiend Folio* is full of crazy fun ideas.

Crinos

07-31-2008 04:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I remember a webcomic called *dungeon damage* that was based on an alternate history dnd setting set in the time of Charlemagne (One of the main PC's was a Christian Elf cleric) That mentioned that the Gnolls had been converted to islam.

They were never shown on screen (the webcomic, IIRC, died,) but I find the idea of Muslim Gnolls oddly awesome.

Alas, thats the only Gnoll story I can think of

...oh, and once in a campaign, my necromancer scared some gnolls shitless, to the point where they dropped their weapons (one of them a big ass lightning gun, which my character confiscated) and ran off. She was cool like that.

glass

07-31-2008 04:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9173142)

I just don't get flinds. Why do bigger, badder gnolls get their own species name? And why do they use nunchuks?

I might be mis-remembering, but I thought they were *smaller* badder gnolls.

glass.

Sleeper

07-31-2008 04:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9176317)

I might be mis-remembering, but I thought they were smaller badder gnolls.

Think you're right. Wasn't it 6 1/2 ft. to 7 or 7 1/2 ft?

Maybe the ordinary gnolls are the lanky hippie types with long flowing locks, and the flinds are the stocky fireplugs with closely-trimmed fur.

Crinos

07-31-2008 05:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I had an idea just now for a fantasy MnM campaign/novel I'm thinking about where goblin genetics are so screwy that they can crossbreed with virtually anything and produce offspring, with the different goblin subspecies and other races being the result of goblin crossbreeding in ancient times (Hobgoblins are part human, Bugbears are part elf or Dwarf, Kobolds are part gnome or Halfling, Trolls are part giant, etc.)

So, maybe Flinds are part goblin/part Gnoll

Rasmus Wagner

07-31-2008 05:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

As I recall it, anyone could spend a Weapon Proficiency Slot to train in Flindbar-Fu. And that kicked *serious* ass.

kelvingreen

07-31-2008 06:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9176589)
So, maybe Flinds are part goblin/part Gnoll

Gnome + Troll = Gnoll? :eek:

Thranguy

07-31-2008 06:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9176792)
Gnome + Troll = Gnoll? :eek:

That way lies the madness of Red-Box D&D, and the Thoul (Troll+Hobgoblin+Ghoul, the child or a truly bizarre monster orgy of some sort...) (Were those in the Mystara appendix?)

Crinos

07-31-2008 07:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9176975)

That way lies the madness of Red-Box D&D, and the Thoul (Troll+Hobgoblin+Ghoul, the child or a truly bizarre monster orgy of some sort...) (Were those in the Mystara appendix?)

As a matter of fact they were.

I'm still trying to figure out how the hell a Ghoul managed to get in on the act.

Anyways, its definitely gonna be my first pdf buy when I start working next week (probably gonna get 1-2 of the old edition books a week, since they're only 5 bucks).

glass

07-31-2008 07:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9173281)

I may just do a "lets read" of the Mystara appendix in celebration, seeing as it was one of my all time favorites.

Do it! I love the monsters in that book!

glass.

kelvingreen

07-31-2008 07:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9176975)

That way lies the madness of Red-Box D&D, and the Thoul

You say madness, I say *genius*.

trippingsatyr

07-31-2008 07:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Am I the only one who saw Crinos's post about wearing gloom wings as a cape and immediattly thought of..THE MONARCH!

Kakita Kojiro

07-31-2008 10:47 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9176792)
Gnome + Troll = Gnoll? :eek:

Heh. Good ol' EGG and his zany ideas. I'd think this would be a good question for Old Geezer... but it seems likely the hyena-men take on gnolls came about in later days than he would have been involved in, alas.

But. While checking wiki for that half-remembered Gnome + Troll thing, I found out about [The Gnoll](#) -- a joint rugby and cricket venue. In Wales.

Runequest had its trollball... perhaps we need gnollball. Which would be sort of like rugby, but with more hyenaesque feeding frenzies. And the effette flinds off playing a game of cricket, with their flindbar bats and in their prep school uniforms... against the visiting giff team.

randomgamer8466

07-31-2008 11:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gnolls, baby! Gnolls!

My PCs were traveling through the desert when they first heard the sharp staccatto barks. I suggested that they might come from jackals, but my players weren't buying it. They prepared for battle.

Team 1 of gnolls advances with shortbows, zings arrows at the PCs (~3rd level) with minimal effect. As the gnolls grow nearer, the fighters charge. The gnolls retreat.

Then team 2 of gnolls appears. They run up to the party's unprotected camels, slash their water bags, and whip the camels into running away.

After that, there were no more gnoll attacks. The gnolls just hung out, just outside missile range, waiting for the inevitable.

Crinos

07-31-2008 11:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9178024)

Gnolls, baby! Gnolls!

My PCs were traveling through the desert when they first heard the sharp staccatto barks. I suggested that they might come from jackals, but my players weren't buying it. They prepared for battle.

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After that, there were no more gnoll attacks. The gnolls just hung out, just outside missile range, waiting for the inevitable.

Oooh, how did your PC's get out of that fix?

Brandi

07-31-2008 02:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9177898)

Heh. Good ol' EGG and his zany ideas. I'd think this would be a good question for Old Geezer... but it seems likely the hyena-men take on gnolls came about in later days than he would have been involved in, alas.

Wikipedia mentions the gnome + troll claim, and also mentions the Lord Dunsany story "[How Nuth Would Have Practiced His Arts Upon the Gnoles](#)". I'd also throw in the story "The Man Who Sold Rope to the Gnoles" by Magaret St. Clair (1951, so no etext that I know of).

kelvingreen

07-31-2008 05:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9177898)

Runequest had its trollball... perhaps we need gnollball. Which would be sort of like rugby, but with more hyenaesque feeding frenzies.

And a trussed up drow as the ball.

I like it!

EDIT: And I had no idea about the early origins of the gnome/troll/gnoll thing; I thought I was being clever! ;)

Crowetron

07-31-2008 06:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ah, Gnolls. I love those crazy fuzzy bastards. I always used to skip over them in the monster manual, and none of my DMs ever really used them, but then I played the original Baldur's Gate. One wacky rescue mission in a fortress full of murderous hyena-men later, Gnolls are my favorite fodder critter.

Orcs are boring, goblins are too easy, and hobgoblins...Why bother? So far, every game I've DMed, or even been allowed to suggest ideas for, has featured Gnolls and Kobolds, because they're so much damn fun.

Also, the one time I used a Flind, he was equipped with a halberd, while one of his ordinary Gnolls took his nunchuck thing. The Gnoll had no idea how to use it, and proved to be vastly entertaining.

kelvingreen

07-31-2008 07:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9179073)

Ah, Gnolls. I love those crazy fuzzy bastards. I always used to skip over them in the monster manual, and none of my DMs ever really used them, but then I played the original Baldur's Gate. One wacky rescue mission in a fortress full of murderous hyena-men later, Gnolls are my favorite fodder critter.

That's pretty much the same for me. I'd barely registered them, beyond the neat DiTerlizzi picture in the *MM*, but they've become firm favourites since that quest in *Baldur's Gate*. I seem to recall that the *BG* gnolls were pretty huge though, about ogre size. I don't have the book with me right now, but that's not right, is it? I'd always imagined them at roughly human size.

EDIT: Also, gnoll pimp:

http://wizards.com/d20modern/images/..._088190_90.jpg

(from *d20 Modern*, I think)

Kakita Kojiro

07-31-2008 10:47 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9178932)

EDIT: And I had no idea about the early origins of the gnome/troll/gnoll thing; I thought I was being clever! ;)

Well, your line of thinking was the same as that of Gary Gygax... surely, nothing to be dismayed by!

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9179163)

That's pretty much the same for me. I'd barely registered them, beyond the neat DiTerlizzi picture in the MM, but they've become firm favourites since that quest in Baldur's Gate. I seem to recall that the BG gnolls were pretty huge though, about ogre size. I don't have the book with me right now, but that's not right, is it? I'd always imagined them at roughly human size.

EDIT: Also, gnoll pimp:

http://wizards.com/d20modern/images/..._088190_90.jpg

(from d20 Modern, I think)

The average Gnoll is about seven feet tall, so they are technically taller than normal humans, though not enough to warrant a size change.

Also, I love that modern picture. Can we break out the modern Medusa and Mind flayer pics when we get to them?

noisms

08-01-2008 12:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gnome

Another hit from the folks at the 'G' section. Gnomes are a favourite of mine, ever since I ran my first Gnome Fighter back in the early days. People often level criticisms at Gnomes, calling them a poor man's dwarf, and those criticisms have now been enshrined in the core rules for the new edition - but I never saw a problem with the race. If anything they're the most interesting because they have the least baggage. Halflings, Elves and Dwarves already have a fixed image in the fantasy genre. Gnomes don't, which means you can do a whole lot more with them.

That said, they really do suffer (in the MM) from being very much like Dwarves. They live underground, mine, work hard, and are small guys with beards. The key distinction seems to be that Gnomes enjoy nature more than Dwarves, and they like to make friends with burrowing animals. So the place where Dwarf meets Elf, maybe.

Rock Gnome

These are the 'standard' Gnomes - the ones from the core rules.

Sverfneblin

Deep Gnomes inhabit the underdark and war incessantly with the Drow, Mind Flayers, and Kuo-Toa. They are notable for being yet another example of the designers getting carried away with racial languages: they can apparently speak their own language (Sverfneblin), Kuo-Toan, Drow, and the Elemental Plane of Earth Common Tongue. That latter one is definitely up there on the Elven Cat List of Unlearned Languages.

Deep Gnomes also like to use 'mithral' steel a lot. Did the D&D people choose the word 'mithral' because Christopher Tolkien would have sued them if they'd called it 'mithril'?

Anyway, I ran a Deep Gnome Fighter for quite some time in an Underdark campaign. The special abilities the creatures get - *blur*, *blindness*, *change self* - are pretty sweet, especially *blur*. Combined with my character's high dexterity and special Sverfneblin armour, he was practically impossible to touch in a fight, and became the de facto tank of the party.

Tinker Gnome

God, I'd forgotten about these. It's funny how the Dragonlance universe had not one but TWO of the most irritating D&D races ever. The less said about these the better (you'll understand if you've read any Dragonlance novels), but there are two notable 'huh?' moments in the entry: first, the home of the Tinker Gnomes beneath Mount Nevermind has the intriguingly precise population figure of 59,000; second, apparently all Tinker Gnomes have a 'Life Quest', which is "to attain perfect understanding of a single device". I suspect that's based on something from a Dragonlance book, but thankfully I forget which.

Forest Gnome

These are the most elf-like of the Gnomish subspecies, being a race of diminutive humanoids who live in the forest, get along well with animals, and shun contact with other races.

Crinos

08-01-2008 01:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Again, never understood the tinker gnome hate. I for one found them endlessly fascinating, and because of that, in most settings I come up with Gnomes end up being the technologically apt species inventing flying machines and trains and such.

And the gnome being between elf and dwarf is a GREAT idea.

Äkräs

08-01-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)

God, I'd forgotten about these. It's funny how the Dragonlance universe had not one but TWO of the most irritating D&D races ever.

Three. You have also forgotten gully dwarves.

demiurge1138

08-01-2008 01:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Äkräs (Post 9180233)
Three. You have also forgotten gully dwarves.

Damn, you beat me to it.

Personally, I love gnomes, and I'm lucky enough to have players who also love them. One of my favorite PCs from a game I ran was the violently insane tinker gnome in my Planescape game. Built all sorts of infernal devices and goofy, brightly colored homunculi, before spending seven years in the Abyss and becoming even crazier.

Ah, good times...

Kakita Kojiro

08-01-2008 02:36 AM

Ahh, the tinker gnomes. I actually ran a Dragonlance adventure where *all* the PCs were kender and tinker gnomes. And "helpful" gully dwarf NPC sidekicks. It was the Battle of Hylo against Dragonlord Toede. And it. was. awesome.

I let the kender PCs randomly "acquire" items from other people they came into contact with -- so all the gnomes immediately stuffed their pockets with rocks. ("I got a rock! cool!"). The tinker gnome PCs all had lifequests, of varying utility ("Deploy tactical sewing machine mkV", "something to do with gears").

Absolute insanity reigned for one glorious evening, culminating in Toede fleeing in humiliation after his dragon mount got brutally stitched by the aforementioned tactical sewing machine. (it was only a white dragon; not too terrifying, really.)

It was such a hit that one of the kender PCs got carried over into my regular Dragonlance campaign, and the players kept agitating for more hijinks. So... their regular PCs got to ally with the gnomish army and save Sancrist from invasion. Some of their old characters showed up again -- as did that damn sewing machine, now mobile and outfitted with many, many gears. They ended up saving the day by recruiting some really mean goats, and absolutely crushing the enemy army with a timely attack by the Gnomish Doomball Armored Brigade (= gnomes, sealed up in huge, metal hamster balls). They were all awarded with the Order of the Golden Screw by the gnomish high command.

And their PCs never, ever talked about it again. Even the kender was kind of embarrassed by the whole thing. :D

Alas, it all happened well before Giant Space Hamsters and Woolly Rupert, or I'd've been tempted to go so over-the-top that they'd've ended up in wildspace...

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)
...They live underground, mine, work hard, and are small guys with beards.

What is up with all the little guys in D&D being beardy types? Dwarves - long, bushy beards. Gnomes - probably trimmed beards or long ones like the Travelocity gnome. Halflings - weedy beards and probably big sideburns. Overcompensating for height? Trying not to get confused with the (previously) not-so-tall elves?

E.T.Smith

08-01-2008 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)

Gnome *If anything they're the most interesting because they have the least baggage. Halflings, Elves and Dwarves already have a fixed image in the fantasy genre. Gnomes don't, which means you can do a whole lot more with them.*

Contrarily, I think that's exactly the problem. Gnomes don't have a strong image associated with them, so there's not much of a framework to hang a character concept on, or even a broader cultural one of that matter. Elves, Dwarves, etc. there's an off-the-rack suite of imagery to work from. "Elven tribe", "Dwarven fortress", "Halfling village", I bet you can visualize what they're like in a moment. "Gnomish city" ... not so much.

If you look over the various D&D lines, you'll see that there are competing ideas as to what a gnome should be like, and not necessarily limited to a particular setting. Greyhawk gives us forest-dwelling illusionists, and for a while that was the general image. But in basic D&D they were just short Dwarves, and that idea started migrating about. When Dragonlance was popular, the tinker gnome came close to being the standard archetype in every setting.

Crinos

08-01-2008 02:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Äkräs (Post 9180233)

Three. You have also forgotten gully dwarves.

I once played a Gully Dwarf PC for one adventure, didn't get to do much though.

David J Prokopetz

08-01-2008 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9180460)

Alas, it all happened well before Giant Space Hamsters and Wooly Rupert, or I'd've been tempted to go so over-the-top that they'd've ended up in wildspace...

Giant space hamsters really were ahead of their time, weren't they? The infamous fire-breathing phase doppelganger giant space hamster sounds **exactly** like an exercise in 3E creature templating gone horribly wrong.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9172933)

Gnoll

Hooray!

I like Gnolls. A lot. I think they were always my favourite humanoid enemy monster, and so much of it is down to the artwork.

Another big gnoll fan here! (My avatar, although technically a werehyena, is close enough. :))

Quote:

I mean, just look at this guy:

<http://www.bajasafaris.com/padnd/images/mm2/gnoll.gif>

Is he not the best picture of a Gnoll there has ever been?

Not sure if it is the best, but it's certainly among the best, and one of the finest in MM. DiTerlizzi sure knew how to make the critters look interesting!

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9173142)

I just don't get flinds. Why do bigger, badder gnolls get their own species name? And why do they use nunchuks?

Because 1e and 2e couldn't handle leveled monsters straight off the books; thus, the existence of flinds, lizard kings, ologs and ogrillions, and others.

(I did use the name "Flind" for the distant homeland of gnolls in one setting.)

As for the gnollish goodness... well, let me link to some artwork by a guy known as Leucrotta / Pachycrocuta:

[Gnoll sketch](#)

[Gnoll pirate \(check out the flag!\)](#)

[Gnoll ranger riding a leucrotta](#)

[Gnoll bard\(!\)](#)

[And a gnoll slaver.](#)

I like gnolls as a barbaric, even bestial race, that's not *quite* without a honor of their own sort; more "red in tooth and claw" than the "slavering semi-demons" of 4e. (Pity, since they're mechanically excellent!)

I enjoyed the idea of a world with goblin moneylenders and gangsters hiring gnoll thugs as combined bodyguards, kneebreakers and evidence disposal system, and where gnoll queens are carried to war on their palanquin-thrones by an amazon guard of their daughters and nieces, and where you could, with care and enough strength, deal and trade with them. :)

kelvingreen

08-01-2008 03:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9179649)

Well, your line of thinking was the same as that of Gary Gygax... surely, nothing to be dismayed by!

"Innovative" then! But yes, not bad company to keep.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)

Tinker Gnome

God, I'd forgotten about these. It's funny how the Dragonlance universe had not one but TWO of the most irritating D&D races ever.

As I recall, the Tinker Gnomes got split into two subraces by the time *Fifth Age* came about; the others were the Thinker Gnomes (groan). Their machines were smaller and portable, far less chaotic, and actually worked as designed, but took longer to build.

Wakboth

08-01-2008 04:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)

If anything they're the most interesting because they have the least baggage. Halflings, Elves and Dwarves already have a fixed image in the fantasy genre. Gnomes don't, which means you can do a whole lot more with them.

Not too much baggage, maybe, but not enough hooks, or distinctive traits and fluff, I'm afraid. I can wax poetic about gnolls, but can barely muster enthusiasm to complain about gnomes. ;)

Quote:

So the place where Dwarf meets Elf, maybe.

One idea I had was to have the gnomes originally be dwarf-elf crossbreeds: dwarven physique combined with elven longevity and interest in magic. They were never numerous, but had become a true-breeding race of their own.

The DiTerlizzi illustrations are very nice, once again.

Brandi

08-01-2008 06:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9179163)
http://wizards.com/d20modern/images/..._088190_90.jpg

"Gnollemite is my name and fuckin' up motha fuckas is my game." (I don't have a particular interest in d20 Modern but I LOVE that illos.)

A Letter From Prague

08-01-2008 07:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9180461)
Gnomes don't have a strong image associated with them,

<http://www.jjcardinal.com/gnome-group.jpg>

?

glass

08-01-2008 07:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9180570)
*Giant space hamsters really were ahead of their time, weren't they? The infamous fire-breathing phase doppelganger giant space hamster sounds **exactly** like an exercise in 3E creature templating gone **exactly right!***

FIFM. Well, maybe. :D

glass.

noisms

08-01-2008 10:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9180461)

Contrarily, I think that's exactly the problem. Gnomes don't have a strong image associated with them, so there's no much of a framework to hang a character concept on, or even a broader cultural one of that matter.

But that means there's more space to get creative.

demiurge1138

08-01-2008 10:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Is it too late to post a gnoll story?

In a homebrew game I ran about 4 years ago, the primary Humanoid Antagonists were gnolls. The game took place in the city of Termana, a colony of a distant empire known for its mastery of divine magic. They landed in an area very heavily populated by gnolls, and so tried to drive them back. The war progressed and prolonged, until a council of gnoll shamans turned to Doesain, the king of the ghouls, in desperation. Doesain raised hundreds of fallen gnolls as ghoulish soldiers and drove back the human colonists, but his influence blighted the once-great hunting lands of the gnolls into a twisted wreckage of bodies and undead, where nothing larger than a raven or goat could persist. The gnoll homeland became the Sea of Graves.

It took me by surprise how sympathetic my PCs were to the gnolls. I was planning for them to have a Kill The Humanoids type adventure to get the McGuffin lost in that war to the Jawcrack Gnolls, but instead they parleyed, getting the McGuffin for the price of monetary tribute, a test of cunning (fulfilled by tracking and hunting a mad slasher, an insane little whirlwind-attacking beastie) and a test of savagery (fulfilled by beating the shaman's personal guard in melee combat).

E.T.Smith

08-01-2008 03:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9182366)

But that means there's more space to get creative.

I agree with that sentiment to a point, but that logic taken to its furthest extreme would mean a PHB made up completely of blank pages would be *totally awesome*. I don't dispute that for you personally (and others of a similar bent) the fuzzy conception of gnomes looked like an opportunity. But for other players (and given the gnomes' perennial role as second-stringers, the majority I think) the gnomes ill-defined status in a game built around strong archetypes made them unappealing.

Crowetron

08-01-2008 05:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9181542)

"Gnollemite is my name and fuckin' up motha fuckas is my game." (I don't have a particular interest in d20 Modern but I LOVE that illos.)

I love this thread.

s/LaSH

08-01-2008 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9176268)

*I remember a webcomic called *dungeon damage* that was based on an alternate history dnd setting set in the time c Charlemagne (One of the main PC's was a Christian Elf cleric) That mentioned that the Gnolls had been converted to islam.*

They were never shown on screen (the webcomic, IIRC, died,) but I find the idea of Muslim Gnolls oddly awesome.

Er, that'll be my old webcomic. Guess this means I don't get to share my own tales of gnolls :) And I'm really very sad I had to let DD lapse (career pressures etc). Chapter 5 would have involved said North African gnolls in large quantities, plus Assassins, crazy stunts in the alleys of Tunis, Babylonian necromancers, and at least one panel of Caterina in this recent outfit design:

<http://smg.photobucket.com/albums/v3...tCatforWeb.jpg>

...before it was discarded as completely impractical. (What is typical wear for a European adventuress with a bad attitude in medieval North Africa? There is no acceptable answer, I fear.) One day I'll have to go back and write the whole thing up as a liberally illustrated text story, packed full of Cossack orcs, mysterious dead people, ninjas with too many mouthparts, big-ass dragons of unexpected allegiance, exploding underwater zombies, and characters who increasingly discover that they don't know who or what they really are.

I will confess to taking no end of inspiration from that awesome diTerlizzi, of course. Who wouldn't? That's a great picture. In fact, much of the *Dungeon Damage* campaign was based on a read-through of this very Monstrous Manual, figuring out what critters would fit where in a world that had to remain at least

cosmetically medieval Europe. Needless to say I'm following this thread very fondly.

noisms

08-01-2008 06:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by s/LaSH (Post 9183529)

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I never read that webcomic, but I just have to say that it sounds like one of those brilliant ideas I occasionally come across and think "Now why didn't I think of that?"

Great stuff.

Crinos

08-01-2008 11:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by s/LaSH (Post 9183529)

Er, that'll be my old webcomic. Guess this means I don't get to share my own tales of gnolls :) And I'm really very sad had to let DD lapse (career pressures etc). Chapter 5 would have involved said North African gnolls in large quantities, plus Assassins, crazy stunts in the alleys of Tunis, Babylonian necromancers, and at least one panel of Caterina in this recent outfit design:

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Manual, figuring out what critters would fit where in a world that had to remain at least cosmetically medieval Europe. Needless to say I'm following this thread very fondly.

Wow, small world.

Anyways, don't worry about it, I know how these things work.

YojimboC

08-04-2008 06:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gnomes. I dunno. Like gnolls, they never really did anything for me. I do have fond memories of a gnome ranger I ran ages ago named Slanter, based off the Terry Brooks character of the same name, but I only had the one. The "little people" didn't appeal to me very much in the old days. And now I'm all about the dwarves.

Dawnforge tweaked gnomes a bit, if I recall, emphasizing the propensity for magic and connection to burrowing mammals. The setting gnomes were very much fey, moreso than even the elves, and that helped carve out a useful niche for them at least.

demiurge1138

08-04-2008 12:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9192349)

Dawnforge tweaked gnomes a bit, if I recall, emphasizing the propensity for magic and connection to burrowing mammals. The setting gnomes were very much fey, moreso than even the elves, and that helped carve out a useful niche for them at least.

The Pathfinder setting also makes gnomes more fey. Recent immigrants from the First World, the setting's fey realm, they do their best to blend in and learn about human society, but they just... don't get it. Which made for great fun when I ran *Rise of the Runelords*. The gnome PC was the First World equivalent of a cubicle drone, working in controlling the weather, who got the opportunity to go to the human world and have an adventure, just like in those human stories he liked reading so much. He treated adventuring like a giant vacation, and had a checklist of "101 Things To Do in the Mortal World", a phrasebook of Common aphorisms (most of which did not work), and kept a log of his teammates' more unusual behaviors.

kelvingreen

08-04-2008 05:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9193126)

He treated adventuring like a giant vacation, and had a checklist of "101 Things To Do in the Mortal World", a

phrasebook of Common aphorisms (most of which did not work), and kept a log of his teammates' more unusual behaviors.

That sounds dangerously close to Kenderism... ;) On the other hand, it also sounds like Twoflower, so it balances out.

randomgamer8466

08-05-2008 11:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9178079)
Oooh, how did your PC's get out of that fix?

(in reference to the time that gnolls cut my PCs' waterbags and drove off their camels in the middle of the desert)

The party included a druid, who definitely earned her mistletoe that week by creating water and charming some new camels.

Crinos

08-05-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9198065)
(in reference to the time that gnolls cut my PCs' waterbags and drove off their camels in the middle of the desert)

The party included a druid, who definitely earned her mistletoe that week by creating water and charming some new camels.

Bet that spoiled the Gnolls day.

noisms

08-05-2008 11:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Sorry for the delay. My hard drive died two days ago, and I'm only now getting back into action. New post coming up shortly.

Steve H

08-06-2008 08:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9200161)

Sorry for the delay. My hard drive died two days ago, and I'm only now getting back into action. New post coming up shortly.

Nasty. But good to see you back - was worried you'd given up on us!

noisms

08-06-2008 12:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

So, let's get the old ball rolling again with the

Goblin!!!!!!

Goblins, eh? Where would we be without them? Well...we'd be hard pressed to dream up fodder for 1st level adventurers, that's for sure.

I'm not sure how I feel about Goblins. On the one hand, I do like the Goblin - Hobgoblin - Bugbear axis of evil, and I generally prefer my enemy creatures to be LE (even if, bizarrely, the 3rd edition people chose to make Goblins NE). And sneaky, ambushy type monsters are often the most fun.

But on the other hand, they are one of those monsters who suffer from ubiquity. Along with kobolds, they are just about the only humanoid creature in the MM who a group of 1st level adventurers can take on in any numbers, which means they're pretty much guaranteed an appearance in a campaign. Which is as boring as hell, really. And there are only so many times you can use giant insects and suchlike as alternatives.

This is another one of those occasions where you have to say that the Warhammer creators really had the right idea. Goblins in Warhammer aren't just sneaky, cowardly runts. They're sneaky, cowardly runts who take poisonous fungus to drive themselves berzerk, ride Squigs like giant space hoppers, catapult themselves at enemies, eat troll steaks to give themselves regenerative powers, and use trained giant spiders to do their fighting for them. Their gonzo weirdness elevates them far above D&D Goblins in the interest stakes.

The other route to go down when making interesting Goblins is, I think, to make them more fairy-like. You could base them on the malignant spirits of old stories - the kind of mean fairies who curdle milk, scatter hay, rattle doorknobs in the night, poison the pig feed, and kidnap babies...

Crinos

08-06-2008 12:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Personally, I liked Magic: The Gatherings goblins, with their general cluelessness and tendency for cartoonish self destruction.

demiurge1138

08-06-2008 12:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Pathfinder also has good goblin flavor. Somewhere in between Warhammer zaniness and evil fey. They steal babies, hate dogs, love setting things on fire, and sing jolly songs as they slice your throat with rusty knives.

Goblins, oddly, have been much more common as PC races in my games than, say, halflings. I once ran a game with Trinton McKinton, an apparently Irish goblin who learned how to be a cleric through correspondence courses. We joked that, after failing Knowledge checks on ghosts, ghouls and plagues in rapid succession, he somehow missed the volume G-P.

Ratoslov

08-06-2008 12:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Goblins really are best done as a PC race, I think. They fit into the 'gnome' niche much better than gnomes do, what with being nasty, cowardly, and short in place of gnomes' short.

Nathan P. Mahney

08-06-2008 03:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Man, I love goblins. I usually use them as ingenious little beggars that are continuously coming up with absurd (and occasionally effective) plans to ambush PCs. The best one was the goblin horde that unleashed a few rust monsters onto some mid-level PCs before charging in wearing hide armor and wielding clubs.

kelvingreen

08-06-2008 05:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9203630)

This is another one of those occasions where you have to say that the Warhammer creators really had the right idea. Goblins in Warhammer aren't just sneaky, cowardly runts. They're sneaky, cowardly runts who take poisonous fungi to drive themselves berserk, ride Squigs like giant space hoppers, catapult themselves at enemies, eat troll steaks to give themselves regenerative powers, and use trained giant spiders to do their fighting for them. Their gonzo weirdness elevates them far above D&D Goblins in the interest stakes.

Yep, Warhammer wins again. I love the idea that they've somehow realised, on a racial level, that they're useless, so have tried to force an uplift in the most chaotic way.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9203764)

I once ran a game with Trinton McKinton, an apparently Irish goblin who learned how to be a cleric through

correspondence courses. We joked that, after failing Knowledge checks on ghosts, ghouls and plagues in rapid succession, he somehow missed the volume G-P.

Brilliant.

I'm a big fan of goblins in games. To avoid them falling into that 1st-level-fodder trap, I tend to bulk them up in various ways, although not always to the Warhammer extreme. I also tend to ignore the bugbear as a separate creature and just use it as a "Boss" Goblin. Ditto the hobgoblin, which I treat as a big goblin rather than a separate species; I then use the name for those unfortunates who are half-goblin. I think "hobgoblin" works nicely in this context as a racial pejorative.

noisms

08-06-2008 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9204424)

Yep, Warhammer wins again. I love the idea that they've somehow realised, on a racial level, that they're useless, so have tried to force an uplift in the most chaotic way.

Yeah, I loved that too. I also liked the willful disregard they have for the lives of their comrades and even themselves - like they know that, as goblins, they're pretty much worthless. The guys who catapult themselves at the enemy were my favourite: they don't care that they'll die, so long as they have a fun death which causes lots of carnage.

I've just realised what I want goblins to be in my next campaign: Redcaps. Not like in Changeling: The Dreaming. I'm talking ultra-violent Scottish fairies who crack bones with their teeth and chew the marrow, then bathe their caps in buckets of blood.

The Last Conformist

08-06-2008 08:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Count another Warhammer goblin lover here.

Don't count, however, the number of painted Warhammer goblin minis I have. It's rather embarrassingly large.

kelvingreen

08-06-2008 09:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9204839)

Don't count, however, the number of painted Warhammer goblin minis I have. It's rather embarrassingly large.

I always wanted to do an all-Goblin army for *WFB*, but I was too intimidated by the idea of painting 200+ miniatures. One day perhaps, when I can get someone else to do it.

noisms

08-06-2008 09:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9204978)

*I always wanted to do an all-Goblin army for WFB, but I was too intimidated by the idea of painting 200+ miniatures
One day perhaps, when I can get someone else to do it.*

I haven't played Warhammer in about 10 years, but when I did I was always one of those lazy people with loads of miniatures just decked out in plain white or black undercoat, with perhaps a green face here or there.

Aaron.Brown

08-06-2008 11:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I love goblins. In fact, the next D&D game I run I'm going to include them as a major race that runs around civilized lands and cities.

I'm also a big fan of the Gnoblar from Warhammer Fantasy. Their silly, but viciously petty behavior is always how I've pictured goblins.

aaron

Crinos

08-07-2008 12:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9204424)

I'm a big fan of goblins in games. To avoid them falling into that 1st-level-fodder trap, I tend to bulk them up in various ways, although not always to the Warhammer extreme. I also tend to ignore the bugbear as a separate creature and just use it as a "Boss" Goblin. Ditto the hobgoblin, which I treat as a big goblin rather than a separate species; I then use the name for those unfortunates who are half-goblin. I think "hobgoblin" works nicely in this context as a racial pejorative.

IIRC, that's how they handle Goblins in the Birthright setting: they're all the same species, some are just bigger than others.

Cerulean Goblins are, of course, described in MCA 3.

Wakboth

08-07-2008 12:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I noticed you left the goblin "art" undescribed, no doubt out of respect for Tony DiTerlizzi. But! Look at... mm, page 398? At the very end of the book and the last page of the index.

I *think* the small guy with the axe and shield is a DiTerlizzi goblin that was, for some weird reason, not used in the actual entry. (Same with the minotaur.)

noisms

08-07-2008 12:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9205652)

I noticed you left the goblin "art" undescribed, no doubt out of respect for Tony DiTerlizzi. But! Look at... mm, page 398? At the very end of the book and the last page of the index.

I think the small guy with the axe and shield is a DiTerlizzi goblin that was, for some weird reason, not used in the actual entry. (Same with the minotaur.)

You could be right, although in the previous incarnation of this thread, a theory was muted that the official MM Goblin pic was actually an early example of a *kobold* drawn by DiTerlizzi that somehow ended up being used for the Goblin.

However, it looks so unlike a DiTerlizzi piece...

Kudos for mentioning the Minotaur in the Index page, by the way. I love that pic, and can't imagine why it wasn't used for as the official Minotaur artwork.

kelvingreen

08-07-2008 03:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9205669)

However, it looks so unlike a DiTerlizzi piece...

He's even got horns poking out of the top of his hat. I suspect it was either an early piece, or a last-minute job after the rejection of the Index Goblin; it certainly has the look of a quick sketch, but it does look like DiTerlizzi's

style, just the kind of thing he'd do at a convention when pushed for time.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9205669)

Kudos for mentioning the Minotaur in the Index page, by the way. I love that pic, and can't imagine why it wasn't used for as the official Minotaur artwork.

Probably because he's a bit weedy, and I'd imagine that they were looking for a brawnier, more comic-book type. They were wrong, of course.

Crinos

08-07-2008 04:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9206420)

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Probably because he's a bit weedy, and I'd imagine that they were looking for a brawnier, more comic-book type. They were wrong, of course.

Probably also that the pic they did use for the Minotaur came, in all likelihood, from a previous MM supplement, and they just decided to use it again instead of paying DiTerlizzi for a Minotaur drawing, found out he already did one, and decided to use it anyways.

Anyways, Kobolds have gone through more changes over the years than any monster, but more about that when we reach them.

see

08-07-2008 05:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The gnoll as a gnome-troll hybrid goes back to the original three booklets, while the gnoll as a hyena-humanoid goes back to the 1st edition Monster Manual. So, looks like Gary Gygax is directly responsible for both in D&D.

The quote from OD&D is "A cross between Gnomes and Trolls (. . . perhaps, Lord Sunsany did not really make it all that clear) with +2 morale." That is, of course, a one-letter-off typo for Lord Dunsany.

The Last Conformist

08-07-2008 11:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I like the sound of "Lord Sunsany" ... let's add it to the list of PC names to use at some point.

David J Prokopetz

08-07-2008 11:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9205669)

You could be right, although in the previous incarnation of this thread, a theory was muted that the official MM Goblin pic was actually an early example of a <i>kobold</i> drawn by DiTerlizzi that somehow ended up being used for the Goblin.

No theory. That little dude first shows up as a kobold in the *Dragon Mountain* boxed set, which was also illustrated by DiTerlizzi and published earlier the same year. If I recall correctly, the reason that the *Monstrous Manual* "goblin" is so low-quality isn't because it's a quick sketch, but because it's cropped from a larger piece and blown up to fit the illustration box.

kelvingreen

08-08-2008 12:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9210337)

If I recall correctly, the reason that the Monstrous Manual "goblin" is so low-quality isn't because it's a quick sketch, but because it's cropped from a larger piece and blown up to fit the illustration box.

That would have been my other guess. :)

noisms

08-08-2008 11:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Golem, General

Golems are a real favourite of mine, and I suspect most other D&D players; they're a must for the sinister archmages, unholy cult leaders, sneaky grand viziers and goodly wizards the fantasy genre loves so much.

I am, however, troubled by the explanation given for Golem creation. Firstly, it seems odd that Golem creation involves tricking, luring or forcing a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Earth into inhabiting a created body, when you consider that Clay Golems can only be created by a Lawful Good priest. It doesn't sound like a very Lawful Good thing to do, really. Secondly and more seriously, what exactly is the spirit *doing* when it's inside the Golem body? It can't be controlling it, because Golems are mindless. And yet the general description for Golems says that the spirit can rebel and go into a bloodcurdling frenzy - which suggests it *does* have control. Rather strange, and makes me wonder whether the designers really thought about it or just decided....oh hell, let's make it a spirit from the Elemental Plane

of Earth.

There's a healthy smattering of pseudo-setting bits scattered through the general description - those odd and mysterious hints that crop up throughout the MM along the lines of "nobody knows the reason why..." and "some have written..." and "it is thought that..." It's interesting that the designers chose to keep such lore even from the games lorekeepers - the DMs. Presumably it was to spur creativity, although the cynical part of me thinks it was just because the designers themselves couldn't be bothered to fully set out the truth of things.

Anyway, a full Golem entry will follow this one.

Crinos

08-08-2008 11:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've always interpreted the elemental spirit thing as being similar to more conventional elemental summoning: You summon the elemental, only instead of giving it a body of dirt and stone, you jam it into a statue or whatever.

As for the mindless thing, I think the idea is that the elemental spirit is just a battery to power the golem, not the driving force behind its actions.

Anyways, Golems have always been a personal favorite of mine, so I greatly look forward to the next couple of days.

Sleeper

08-08-2008 11:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9213055)

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I appreciate that more and more these days. Hints that inspire the DM to create and invent, instead of official answers everyone will read. The reason dark continents and lost peoples engendered so much mystique. Foreknowledge can be diminishing.

Brutus

08-08-2008 11:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9203630)

So, let's get the old ball rolling again with the

Goblin!!!!!!

Goblins, eh? Where would we be without them? Well...we'd be hard pressed to dream up fodder for 1st level adventurers, that's for sure.

This... This is how I feel about goblins. Always my favorite monster and I felt they never quite got the iconic status and attention they deserved. They're the most basic of monsters. An evolution of the idea of the fae boogeyman to a squishable thug. I never really felt they captured the roots or feel of any of the folklore that birthed the little buggers.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9203630)

The other route to go down when making interesting Goblins is, I think, to make them more fairy-like. You could base them on the malignant spirits of old stories - the kind of mean fairies who curdle milk, scatter hay, rattle doorknobs in the night, poison the pig feed, and kidnap babies...

This! Yes. They're one-hit (literally, squish) wonders instead of interesting pranksters, boogeymen, or clever annoyances they really could be. That's my beef with most of D&D though, we very rarely get much information beyond how hard it is to cave in a creature's skull.

I guess Jermlaine will have to sate some of my need for fae jerkwads. But it's not the same. :p

6inTruder

08-08-2008 12:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9213140)

As for the mindless thing, I think the idea is that the elemental spirit is just a battery to power the golem, not the driving force behind its actions.

This is pretty much my take on it. With the addendum that a golem's rage ability is actually the (now insane) spirit battery taking over.

Nathan P. Mahney

08-08-2008 12:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I used to hate the Goblin illo, until I hit on the idea that it was actually drawn by a Goblin master artiste.

Also, Golems are way cool, but I can't recall ever encountering one in a game. That's a side effect of playing in mostly low-level games, I suppose. There are a lot of weird ones in the MM, so I'm looking forward to these.

Crinos

08-08-2008 12:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The only thing that ever really cheesed me about golems is their immunity to nearly all magic.

Anyways, the berzerker golem thing is odd because the only golems that suffer from it are the Flesh and Clay golems. The two greater golems don't, and neither do any of the following golem types ever made.

I know that originally there were just the four types of Golem (Flesh, Clay, Stone and Iron), and that the idea of lesser golems were that they were easier to make but also had the risk of going batshit crazy during a fight, but why didn't any of the newer golems do this?

Also, amusing fact, aside from the stone variants at the very end, most of these golem variants come from Ravenloft.

(un)reason

08-08-2008 01:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9213055)

Golem, General

I am, however, troubled by the explanation given for Golem creation. Firstly, it seems odd that Golem creation involves tricking, luring or forcing a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Earth into inhabiting a created body, when you consider that Clay Golems can only be created by a Lawful Good priest. It doesn't sound like a very Lawful Good thing to do, really. Secondly and more seriously, what exactly is the spirit doing when it's inside the Golem body? It can't be controlling it, because Golems are mindless. And yet the general description for Golems says that the spirit can rebel and go into a bloodcurdling frenzy - which suggests it does have control. Rather strange, and makes me wonder whether the designers really thought about it or just decided....oh hell, let's make it a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Earth.

You know how in Sonic, when they smash the eggman robots, little animals come out. They're powering the machines, but are in no way in control. Yeah, it's like that. They're trapping the spirits in a metaphysical hamster wheel, and using that fury to power the golems. There are probably more efficient ways of doing it, but wizards will be wizards. And as for priests. They don't even have a clue, they're just following their gods instructions. As we've seen, deities are held to a different set of standards when it comes to morals. A little fucking with humans, particularly in the right cause (those earth spirits might well be grues or something else that deserves to be trapped and tortured for eternity) impacts their karmic balance as much as squashing the odd bug now and then does for humans.

see

08-08-2008 01:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Remember, the inhabitants of the Elemental Plane of Earth include "animentials", which are direct analogs of terrestrial animals. The spirit bound in a clay golem might be the mental equivalent of an animal (a vicious, murdering animal, but an animal all the same). Lawful good characters generally don't have much trouble with, for example, the enslavement of horses.

David J Prokopetz

08-08-2008 01:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9213251)

Anyways, the berzerker golem thing is odd because the only golems that suffer from it are the Flesh and Clay golems. The two greater golems don't, and neither do any of the following golem types ever made.

I think it's more likely that there's no overarching reasoning behind it; flesh and clay golems are prone to flipping out because of Frankenstein's monster and Rabbi Loew's golem, respectively.

Crinos

08-08-2008 02:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9213503)

I think it's more likely that there's no overarching reasoning behind it; flesh and clay golems are prone to flipping out because of Frankenstein's monster and Rabbi Loew's golem, respectively.

Well I know that, that's where I first learned about Golems (Well read Crinos was well read even in grade school)

Course, I didn't equate Frankenstein's monster with Golems back then, another thing I have DnD to thank for.

noisms

08-08-2008 02:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9213500)

Remember, the inhabitants of the Elemental Plane of Earth include "animentials", which are direct analogs of terrestrial animals. The spirit bound in a clay golem might be the mental equivalent of an animal (a vicious, murdering animal, but an animal all the same). Lawful good characters generally don't have much trouble with, for example, the enslavement of horses.

Yeah, but horses get something out of the deal, don't they? i.e. Feed and security.

Animentials used for Golem-power don't get anything except an infinity of hurt, it seems.

Crinos

08-08-2008 02:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Actually I think I read somewhere that the spirits used to animate golems are roughly the elemental equivalent of plants.

Personally, In my setting I'd make the spirits that animate Golems Lawful spirits, who exist solely for the purpose of animating Golems.

Sleeper

08-08-2008 02:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9213500)

Remember, the inhabitants of the Elemental Plane of Earth include "animentials", which are direct analogs of terrestrial animals. The spirit bound in a clay golem might be the mental equivalent of an animal (a vicious, murdering animal, but an animal all the same). Lawful good characters generally don't have much trouble with, for example, the enslavement of horses.

That was always one of my biggest problems with the inner planes. Either silly random things with tentacles, or horses and turnips caked with mud. Except for the borrowed genies, there was a desperate lack of anything resembling originality or even the rudiments of sense. That and the terribly inconsistent subjective gravity. The City of Brass was evocative and cool, but it was set in the midst of a poorly defined morass.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9213251)

The only thing that ever really cheesed me about golems is their immunity to nearly all magic.

Agreed. Though I suspect it was originally just a mechanical shortcut that later editions tried to justify without much success.

Crinos

08-08-2008 03:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213702)

That was always one of my biggest problems with the inner planes. Either silly random things with tentacles, or horses and turnips caked with mud. Except for the borrowed genies, there was a desperate lack of anything resembling originality or even the rudiments of sense. That and the terribly inconsistent subjective gravity. The City of Brass was evocative and cool, but it was set in the midst of a poorly defined morass.

I dunno, the elemental planes have always held a little bit of charm for me. I didn't like em at first, but after the Planescape appendix 3 they definitely became a favorite of mine.

Sleeper

08-08-2008 03:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9213716)

I dunno, the elemental planes have always held a little bit of charm for me. I didn't like em at first, but after the Planescape appendix 3 they definitely became a favorite of mine.

I missed out on Planescape.

David J Prokopetz

08-08-2008 03:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213719)

I missed out on Planescape.

Among other things, *Planescape* formalises the way subjective gravity works, which might address one of your points. There's a mechanic for convincing yourself that up is down, with the expected consequences. :D

(It even makes the Quasielemental Plane of Salt make sense, which is no mean feat.)

noisms

08-08-2008 03:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213719)

I missed out on Planescape.

You should see if you can track down two of the books: *Monstrous Compendium III* and the Campaign Expansion: *The Inner Planes* one. The latter is written entirely in character, mostly by various kinds of mephits, and it has to rank as one of the best supplements ever released for D&D.

EDIT: I may do the Planescape MCs as a follow up to this thread, so keep your eyes peeled once, in a century's time, I get this finished.

Crinos

08-08-2008 03:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213719)
I missed out on Planescape.

I never got into Planescape proper, just got the monstrous compendiums for completist purposes.

But what I gleaned from the planes from them I really liked. Especially the paramental and quasimental planes (the fact they were never included in 3e is a travesty of justice).

Sleeper

08-08-2008 03:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9213751)
Among other things, Planescape formalises the way subjective gravity works, which might address one of your points. There's even a mechanic for convincing yourself that up is down, with the expected consequences. :D

(It even made the Quasielemental Plane of Salt make sense, which is no mean feat.)

Well, probably not entirely. The idea of zero g is a strange fit for fantasy (like psionics in many ways), and the attempt to mesh it with metaphorical will-driven magical thinking (the subjective nature) felt clumsy. In many ways, that was true for the entire design of the inner planes. It felt like the writers were trying to create an exotic science fiction world, except with fantasy. So there was a strange mix of modern concepts, relativism, and fantasy elements without any coherent logic holding the whole together. There were horses of rock, and water. But why? In an endless sea without any bottom, or an endless expanse of rock with a few tunnels where all the natives can pass through the stone like we can pass through the atmosphere, why does that form make any sense? There wasn't any attempt to create the mythic resonance in good fantasy either, with strange tectonic entities from our subconscious. It never quite came together. I once tried to justify the elemental plane of air to myself using the concept of the smoke ring (a torus of breathable air around a neutron star) from Niven's *Integral Trees* duology, which kind of worked (though it would be a trick to extrapolate to the other planes) but that's very different from what was presented.

I've been keeping an eye out for Planescape supplements, but since it's just a casual interest I have a hard time justifying spending the money the books go for these days (and reading more than a dozen pages in a pdf gets painful).

David J Prokopetz

08-08-2008 03:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213809)

Well, probably not entirely. The idea of zero g is a strange fit for fantasy (like psionics in many ways), and the attempt to mesh it with metaphorical will-driven magical thinking (the subjective nature) felt clumsy.

Again, *Planescape* explicitly addresses all of the stuff you've mentioned here. The way it handles the material may not be to your taste, but it doesn't just gloss over it as you suggest.

(Yes, it even tries to explain walruses made of fire and suchlike in metaphysical terms. It's quite entertaining. :))

Sleeper

08-08-2008 03:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9213815)

Again, Planescape explicitly addresses all of the stuff you've mentioned here. The way it handles the material may not be to your taste, but it doesn't just gloss over it as you suggest.

I didn't suggest that :p. I haven't read Planescape, so I'm talking about the pre- (and some post-) Planescape planar material.

The whole Planescape thing is very strange, from an outsider's perspective. There's the adoring love, but the bits and pieces that spill out in internet discussions and find their ways into post-Planescape books often seem absurdly, almost painfully silly. I can't figure out if it's just really strong writing, or if the point is the absurdity, and the material somehow surpasses the underlying elements and becomes a thing of zany beauty, like Gamma World at its peak, or if it's something else entirely.

Wakboth

08-08-2008 04:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9213503)

I think it's more likely that there's no overarching reasoning behind it; flesh and clay golems are prone to flipping out because of Frankenstein's monster and Rabbi Loew's golem, respectively.

Yah, that's fairly obvious IMO.

The whole magic immunity thing is a bit baffling, though. 3e improved on this by giving them essentially infinite Spell Resistance, so you could affect golems with the specific anti-golem spells (as appropriate for the type), and with a handful of others. This meant spellcasters weren't suddenly totally worthless against golems. (Of course, they then screwed things horribly up by giving us the *Orb of Foo* spells, but that's a rant for different thread and edition. ;))

kelvingreen

08-08-2008 05:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9213195)
There are a lot of weird ones in the MM, so I'm looking forward to these.

Yes, it's probably my favourite multiple-monster section, and I wish there'd been more (like the wonderful maggot golem!) included.

noisms

08-08-2008 05:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9214035)
Yes, it's probably my favourite multiple-monster section, and I wish there'd been more (like the wonderful maggot golem!) included.

If you like Golems and want another take on them, I recommend *Iron Council* by China Mieville. Like all his writing it's hit and miss, but it has some great Golem ideas. One of the main characters specialises in their creation, and does seem pretty weird and wonderful things - including animating a collection of dead bodies on a battlefield into one humanoid shape, and crafting a Golem out of moonlight.

sim_james

08-08-2008 09:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213859)
*The whole Planescape thing is very strange, from an outsider's perspective. There's the adoring love, but the bits and pieces that spill out in internet discussions and find their ways into post-Planescape books often seem absurdly, almost painfully silly. I can't figure out if it's just really strong writing, or if the point is the absurdity, and the material somehow surpasses the underlying elements and becomes a thing of zany beauty, like *Gamma World* at its peak, or if it's something else entirely.*

Well, the fact that the writing *was* really strong certainly didn't hurt!

When you take things in context, Planescape is often surreal. Out of context, the surreal becomes absurd.

For example, a dimension of "really boring mud that drains colour out of everything" might seem a bit silly, but the Grey Waste was no joke.

noisms

08-08-2008 09:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9213859)

The whole Planescape thing is very strange, from an outsider's perspective. There's the adoring love, but the bits and pieces that spill out in internet discussions and find their ways into post-Planescape books often seem absurdly, almost painfully silly. I can't figure out if it's just really strong writing, or if the point is the absurdity, and the material somehow surpasses the underlying elements and becomes a thing of zany beauty, like Gamma World at its peak, or if it's something else entirely.

A mixture of great writing, great art, and great production values keep it from sliding into zaniness or absurdity. It just strikes the right balance between not taking itself too seriously, and not turning into a joke.

kelvingreen

08-08-2008 09:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9214072)

If you like Golems and want another take on them, I recommend Iron Council by China Mieville. Like all his writing it's hit and miss, but it has some great Golem ideas. One of the main characters specialises in their creation, and does seem pretty weird and wonderful things - including animating a collection of dead bodies on a battlefield into one humanoid shape, and crafting a Golem out of moonlight.

Yeah, it's my least favourite of his books so far, but it does at least maintain the high Good Idea Quotient of all his novels.

noisms

08-08-2008 10:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9214570)

Yeah, it's my least favourite of his books so far, but it does at least maintain the high Good Idea Quotient of all his novels.

Yeah. This is getting off topic but I wish the man would stop it with the political screeds and just write stories. *The Scar* was by far his best, because it was just a good adventure tale above all else.

Inyssius

08-08-2008 11:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9213055)

There's a healthy smattering of pseudo-setting bits scattered through the general description - those odd and mysterious hints that crop up throughout the MM along the lines of "nobody knows the reason why..." and "some have written..." and "it is thought that..." It's interesting that the designers chose to keep such lore even from the games lorekeepers - the DMs. Presumably it was to spur creativity, although the cynical part of me thinks it was just because the designers themselves couldn't be bothered to fully set out the truth of things.

Skipping back a ways... I despise this stuff. I'm cool with keeping things ambiguous, but these damned ubiquitous *sages* should either be mentioned in more detail or left out entirely.

It seems like this "some have written" and "sages suggest" nonsense could only be useful in-game if your players actually find the books in question or track down one of those sages. That's *anawesome plot point*, but then there has to be something interesting or useful in those writings or those suggestions. There never is, and that irritates the hell out of me. If the writers could keep all of these notes out of the actual monster entry (just say "they might live in swamps," for god's sake!) and then have an actual section detailing the views of individual oddball sages and competing wizard-college schools of thought and maybe-inaccurate ancient bestiaries... well, that would be awesome.

Crinos

08-09-2008 12:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

While we're on the subject of Planescape, I'd like to suggest [Li Po's hermitage](#), a website by a christian gamer describing his own interpretation of the outer and inner planes, along with some role playing and gaming hints.

I really enjoy this site, and back in the days of 2e before PDF books and Paypal, this was the closest thing to a real manual of the planes I had.

Thranguy

08-09-2008 01:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9213195)

I used to hate the Goblin illo, until I hit on the idea that it was actually drawn by a Goblin master artiste.

Also, Golems are way cool, but I can't recall ever encountering one in a game. That's a side effect of playing in mostly low-level games, I suppose. There are a lot of weird ones in the MM, so I'm looking forward to these.

That's why the Carytid Column was my favorite monster out of the original Monster Manual 2. Golems you could throw at low-level parties! Genius!

Sleeper

08-09-2008 03:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9215543)

That's why the Carytid Column was my favorite monster out of the original Monster Manual 2. Golems you could throw at low-level parties! Genius!

Fiend Folio not MM2 :). To expand on something that just came up in (unreason)'s sister thread, caryatid columns are mentioned in Ed Greenwood's Fiend Folio rant in issue #55. He thinks the name "caryatid column" is terribly uneuphonic (along with the symbiotic jelly and the atrocious protien polymorph). From the context, it's not clear if he's aware the name is actually a reference to an element of Greek architecture. In any case I don't agree. It's trippingly alliterative.

Sleeper

08-09-2008 04:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Continuing with a caryatid column riff: The party enters a forgotten temple, supported by two series of pillars. Each is carved in the shape of a woman, holding a sword at rest. Some weapons are held quillon up, with the tip resting on the ground. Others lay across shoulders, or are cradled in arms. As the party enters there is a grinding sound followed by a swirl of dust, as one of the granite women steps forward off her plinth. She strikes a martial stance, and once again becomes immobile.

If the party continues, there is a whirl of blood and footwork before she is shattered into rubble. Immediately, her sister from the opposing row of columns steps forward, and strikes a new pose. The new combatant freezes in position, and in the stillness before the inevitable melee, a slight creak and groan can be heard from the distant ceiling.

As the sisterhood of caratid columns are defeated one by one, dust continues to shake from the arched vault until the PCs start to cough and choke until a virtual waterfall. The roof starts to groan, then moan, creak, and at times almost seems to whimper. The remaining pillars start to shake and shift as each new caryatid steps forth. Scattered clatters are heard as rocks drop and skitter across the floor, and these sounds turn into thumps and thuds.

If the party heedlessly presses forward, there is a great billow of dust as the last caryatid column steps forth. The floor heaves, and the world becomes one roar so great and deep that it seems like howl of white noise is rising from the character's bones. The last thing they see is a huge block shattering the impassive visage of the last of the amazonian columns, before it all goes dark. The structural supports are gone, and the entire edifice has tumbled down on top of

the foolish burglars.

noisms

08-09-2008 09:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9214776)

If the writers could keep all of these notes out of the actual monster entry (just say "they might live in swamps," for god's sake!) and then have an actual section detailing the views of individual oddball sages and competing wizard-college schools of thought and maybe-inaccurate ancient bestiaries... well, that would be awesome.

That would be nice. I've said it before, but I've always wanted a bestiary written in situ, as it were - with the entries compilations of accounts by sages, eyewitnesses and adventurers. There would be no stats - the DM would have to make up their own based on the descriptions - and some of the accounts for the same monster would be conflicting, so that you could never be sure what exactly that Umber Hulk was going to do next...

6inTruder

08-09-2008 10:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217508)

That would be nice. I've said it before, but I've always wanted a bestiary written in situ, as it were - with the entries compilations of accounts by sages, eyewitnesses and adventurers. There would be no stats - the DM would have to make up their own based on the descriptions - and some of the accounts for the same monster would be conflicting, so that you could never be sure what exactly that Umber Hulk was going to do next...

So..... Almost exactly the opposite of the 4ed MM?

noisms

08-09-2008 10:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9217580)

So..... Almost exactly the opposite of the 4ed MM?

Maybe you could call it the Anti-4ed-MM.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Golem, Greater

Greater Golem, Stone Golem

This is the one I always imagine when I think of Golems, although technically I suppose the Clay Golem is the real archetypal one. (I do have to say, though, that I find it odd there is no Wood Golem in D&D. One of my earliest memories of getting into the fantasy genre was when I was about 10 or so years old and reading one of the *Sorcery!* Fighting Fantasy gamebooks, which had a particularly vivid scene of an evil enchantress animating a Wood Golem to attack the reader.) Anyway, I like the vaguely Egyptian tone the artwork has, which means you can imagine the thing inhabiting some sort of underground temple to the dark god, Set.

There's not much more to Stone Golems (or indeed any Golems) than just hitting stuff, but there is a relatively lengthy expounding on the effects of various stone-shaping magics. The upshot is that *rock to mud* slows the Golem down, *mud to rock* heals it, and *flesh to stone* makes it vulnerable to ordinary weapons. (Shome mishtake, shurely? *Stone to flesh* would make more sense for that, no?)

Greater Golem, Iron Golem

A big, metal humanoid which will kill you. A bit like the Terminator, I suppose. Points of interest:

- They sometimes have short swords, which are occasionally magical... (cue sinister DM laugh).
- Electrical damage slows them, but by contrast magical fire heals them - which I suppose is because magical fire is involved in their creation.
- They are subject to Rust Monster attacks, although it's difficult to imagine how a DM could get away with putting a Rust Monster in close enough proximity to an Iron Golem to be useful, without having it seem like a sop to the players. ("Okay, so there's an Iron Golem coming to beat you up. I know you all hate me now. But look what's in the next room - a Rust Monster! What a coincidence!")
- Bizarrely, Iron Golems automatically breathe a cloud of poisonous gas every 7 rounds ("beginning on either the first or second round of combat"[?]); it doesn't say why they do this, or what kind of poison it is. It's just...poisonous gas. I'm interpreting that to mean it's the save or die kind of poisonous gas. Because it just wouldn't be any fun otherwise.

David J Prokopetz

08-09-2008 11:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217653)

- Bizarrely, Iron Golems automatically breathe a cloud of poisonous gas every 7 rounds ("beginning on either the first or second round of combat"[?]); it doesn't say why they do this, or what kind of poison it is. It's just...poisonous gas. I'm interpreting that to mean it's the save or die kind of poisonous gas. Because it just wouldn't be any fun otherwise.

I know that there's a specific precedent for the poison gas thing, but for the life of me I can't recall the context -

only that I read it at some point.

Crinos

08-09-2008 11:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Yeah, I noticed too that there was never an official wood golem, although many 3rd party wood golems sprung up during 3rd edition.

As for the poisonous gas, I think its supposed to be cloudkill (since that's one of the spells used to make them), but don't quote me. I always imagined that the Golem would breath it out, or release it as some sort of exhaust like they were toxic fumes.

BTW, aren't stone golems capable of casting slow on people? I've never been able to explain how to work that thematically.

EDIT: As for the Rust Monster thing, it actually makes for an interesting plot hook: Low level PC's need to get into a dungeon/through a pass but the front guards are Iron Golems. Since the PC's would be slaughtered in a fair fight, they have to hunt down and capture some rust monsters in the surrounding wastelands, train them, then send them against the Iron Golems so they can continue.

JasonK

08-09-2008 11:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9213761)

EDIT: I may do the Planescape MCs as a follow up to this thread, so keep your eyes peeled once, in a century's time, I get this finished.

I would vote for YES! :D

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9216284)

Continuing with a caryatid column riff:

-snip-

The structural supports are gone, and the entire edifice has tumbled down on top of the foolish burglars.

Yeah, I'm stealing the hell out of that idea. :)

That said, re: golems in general, they just never seemed worth it to me. I mean, sure they're tough, but they are not either easy or cheap for a wizard/priest to make, and all it takes is one solid group of adventurers to come by... Better off with the undead, in my opinion. Besides - immune to magic? What's a wizard going to do when they go crazy on him, then?

noisms

08-09-2008 11:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9217717)

That said, re: golems in general, they just never seemed worth it to me. I mean, sure they're tough, but they are not either easy or cheap for a wizard/priest to make, and all it takes is one solid group of adventurers to come by... Bette off with the undead, in my opinion. Besides - immune to magic? What's a wizard going to do when they go crazy on him, then?

If literature and films have taught me anything, it's that evil archmages and priests are curiously incapable of thinking logically about these things...

Crinos

08-09-2008 11:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217730)

If literature and films have taught me anything, it's that evil archmages and priests are curiously incapable of thinking logically about these things...

except only two types of golems can go berserk, and one of them can only be made by GOOD clerics.

Course, Clay Golems have a built in plot hook: Clay Golem belonging to a local Good Cleric has gone apeshit, needs to be put down, enter the PC's to track it down before it can hurt anyone.

(un)reason

08-09-2008 11:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217653)

[]They are subject to Rust Monster attacks, although it's difficult to imagine how a DM could get away with putting a Rust Monster in close enough proximity to an Iron Golem to be useful, without having it seem like a sop to the players. ("Okay, so there's an Iron Golem coming to beat you up. I know you all hate me now. But look what's in the next room - a Rust Monster! What a coincidence!")*

Just remember how many dungeons with medusae or gorgons also had scrolls of stone to flesh nearby. (I'm sure its well over 50% in dozens of different modules.) It's really rather amusing to see just how few designers are willing to be truly random and mean with their encounters.

Crinos

08-09-2008 11:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9217737)

Just remember how many dungeons with medusae or gorgons also had scrolls of stone to flesh nearby. (I'm sure its well over 50% in dozens of different modules.) It's really rather amusing to see just how few designers are willing to be truly random and mean with their encounters.

Well I think that's just a safety precaution on behalf of the dungeon builders. I mean when you're handling monsters that can turn you to stone you have to be prepared for some sort of mishap.

DMH

08-09-2008 11:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Does anyone have a link or quote about how the clay golem's insane damage (ie it can only be healed by a 17th level cleric) is because the creator was drunk at the time of writing?

noisms

08-09-2008 11:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9217754)

Does anyone have a link or quote about how the clay golem's insane damage (ie it can only be healed by a 17th level cleric) is because the creator was drunk at the time of writing?

Yeah, how weird is that? Anyway, I'll come to it in the next entry.

Sleeper

08-09-2008 01:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217653)

A big, metal humanoid which will kill you. A bit like the Terminator, I suppose.

[snip]

- Electrical damage slows them, but by contrast magical fire heals them - which I suppose is because magical fire is involved in their creation.

I originally thought of iron golems as a big lump of cast iron, but the hollow armored shell (with an echoing clang when you hit it) perhaps with steampunk pipes and bellows works better. D&D golems are just weird. Clear mythological antecedents, stirred up with all kinds of random strangeness. The fire thing is at least a cool visual -- in the inferno of a *fireball*, the golem beats against its white-hot chest, reshaping the metal twisted by blows and nicked by swords back into its original form. Though they're still not as weird as making the gorgon into a steel-plated bull that turns you stone when it coughs.

Crinos

08-09-2008 01:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218026)

Though they're still not as weird as making the gorgon into a steel-plated bull that turns you stone when it coughs.

Well, that's what a gorgon was according to some myths (I think middle eastern).

Basically they had too vastly different monsters with the same name, so they named the snake women Gorgons Medusa and kept the Bulls Gorgons.

Sleeper

08-09-2008 01:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9218054)

Well, that's what a gorgon was according to some myths (I think middle eastern).

Basically they had too vastly different monsters with the same name, so they named the snake women Gorgons Medusa and kept the Bulls Gorgons.

I hadn't heard that. The older classical versions often have animal features attributed (like many of the composite monsters, such as unicorns being described as having the feet of elephants and beard of a goat or such) like tusks and tails, but I never heard of an armored bull version. The closest I could find with a quick search is an ancient coin, that has a bull on one side and the face of a gorgon on the other:

<http://www.snible.org/coins/parion.html>

Crinos

08-09-2008 02:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218100)

I hadn't heard that. The older classical versions often have animal features attributed (like many of the composite monsters, such as unicorns being described as having the feet of elephants and beard of a goat or such) like tusks and tails, but I never heard of an armored bull version. The closest I could find with a quick search is an ancient coin, that has a bull on one side and the face of a gorgon on the other:

<http://www.snible.org/coins/parion.html>

Wasn't really a Metal Bull, it was more like a scaly Buffalo with poisonous breath.

I read about it in a Halloween issue of Ranger Rick that featured all sorts of crazy creepy animals and had an article on mythical creatures. (It was an older issue, with a picture of a Mandrill on the front. I had it in one of my classrooms when I was a kid and read the hell out of it when I was a kid.

Kakita Kojiro

08-09-2008 02:34 PM

EEG lifted the metallic, bullish gorgon from a medieval bestiary -- [see here](#) for a post commenting on that. (I actually like the commentor's take better.)

The catoblepas is the water-buffalo-like critter with the poisonous breath. Also from medieval bestiaries. Alas, that we never got a D&D bonnacon.

Crinos

08-09-2008 02:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9218221)

EEG lifted the metallic, bullish gorgon from a medieval bestiary -- see here for a post commenting on that. (I actually like the commentor's take better.)

The catoblepas is the water-buffalo-like critter with the poisonous breath. Also from medieval bestiaries. Alas, that we never got a D&D bonnacon.

Think you may be right, wish I could find that issue of Ranger Rick so I could look it up. But its super old and there aren't any sites with ranger rick cover galleries or anything.

Anaxamander

08-09-2008 02:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217653)

They are subject to Rust Monster attacks, although it's difficult to imagine how a DM could get away with putting a Rust Monster in close enough proximity to an Iron Golem to be useful, without having it seem like a sop to the players. ("Okay, so there's an Iron Golem coming to beat you up. I know you all hate me now. But look what's in the next room - a Rust Monster! What a coincidence!")

But there is nothing stopping a player from rounding up some rust monsters and putting them in wooden cages to throw at the iron golems guarding the entrance to the evil temple. It might come up in a battle too, where one side has animated iron golems and the other has trained rust monsters to counter them. (Also why aren't rust monsters used on the battlefield more often?)

Sleeper

08-09-2008 03:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9218221)

EEG lifted the metallic, bullish gorgon from a medieval bestiary -- see here for a post commenting on that. (I actually like the commentor's take better.)

The catoblepas is the water-buffalo-like critter with the poisonous breath. Also from medieval bestiaries. Alas, that we never got a D&D bonnacon.

Nor the yale (oxen who fence with their horns :)).

Thanks for the link. The specific medieval bestiary isn't mentioned, and another poster suggests that the gorgon was actually based on the fire-breathing bulls Jason had to harness to sow the dragon's teeth, and Gygax agrees in an elliptical fashion to that as well. I'd be interested to know the original source.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Anaxamander (Post 9218246)

But there is nothing stopping a player from rounding up some rust monsters and putting them in wooden cages to throw at the iron golems guarding the entrance to the evil temple. It might come up in a battle too, where one side has animated iron golems and the other has trained rust monsters to counter them. (Also why aren't rust monsters used on the battlefield more often?)

Polymorph other the rust monsters into a harmless portable form, and then deploy along with a dispel magic. They're a never-leave-home-without-them item, along with green slime in ceramic flasks, and large boulders shrunk down with the item spell.

Anaxamander

08-09-2008 03:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218302)

Polymorph other the rust monsters into a harmless portable form, and then deploy along with a dispel magic. They'r a never-leave-home-without-them item, along with green slime in ceramic flasks, and large boulders shrunk down with the item spell.

Those are some great tricks. Still, herding rust monsters might happen at very low levels against iron golems (as a way to get in the front door when the DM explicitly put them there to make you go in the back door. In such a situation you should never go in the back door; the DM is expecting that. Consider tunnelling in from below if all else fails.).

Sleeper

08-09-2008 03:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Anaxamander (Post 9218311)

Those are some great tricks. Still, herding rust monsters might happen at very low levels against iron golems (as a way to get in the front door when the DM explicitly put them there to make you go in the back door. In such a situation you should never go in the back door; the DM is expecting that. Consider tunnelling in from below if all else fails.).

I always liked tossing in a couple monsters way beyond the PCs ability to handle through standard methods (sword and spell and straight-up combat). The important things are to make it very clear the monster is totally out of their league, to make sure there's an obvious escape route, and to make them of incidental importance. Iron golems are perfect for that. Simple-mindedly constrained by the commands of their long-gone creator, they are easy to avoid (just leave the circumscribed area), and with some creativity that's just one of many ways a party could come up with to bypass or even destroy the automaton.

Crinos

08-09-2008 03:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218335)

I always liked tossing in a couple monsters way beyond the PCs ability to handle through standard methods (sword and spell and straight-up combat). The important things are to make it very clear the monster is totally out of their league, to make sure there's an obvious escape route, and to make them of incidental importance. Iron golems are perfect for that. Simple-mindedly constrained by the commands of their long-gone creator, they are easy to avoid (just leave the circumscribed area), and with some creativity that's just one of many ways a party could come up wit

to bypass or even destroy the automaton.

That's actually a very good idea.

If I ever live my dream of running a Fantasy MnM campaign, I will certainly take your advice.

demiurge1138

08-09-2008 03:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217508)

That would be nice. I've said it before, but I've always wanted a bestiary written in situ, as it were - with the entries compilations of accounts by sages, eyewitnesses and adventurers. There would be no stats - the DM would have to make up their own based on the descriptions - and some of the accounts for the same monster would be conflicting, so that you could never be sure what exactly that Umber Hulk was going to do next...

Check out the Monsternomicon for Iron Kingdoms. It's still got stats, but is full of quotes and anecdotes from its (NPC) author, and various rumors, adventure hooks, and usable body parts. The d20 stats are sort of wonky, but the flavor is exquisite.

noisms

08-09-2008 03:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218335)

I always liked tossing in a couple monsters way beyond the PCs ability to handle through standard methods (sword and spell and straight-up combat). The important things are to make it very clear the monster is totally out of their league, to make sure there's an obvious escape route, and to make them of incidental importance. Iron golems are perfect for that. Simple-mindedly constrained by the commands of their long-gone creator, they are easy to avoid (just leave the circumscribed area), and with some creativity that's just one of many ways a party could come up wit to bypass or even destroy the automaton.

I often do that too. Elementals are another good example - in my PBEM game the party recently had to flee their enemy's den because of a summoned Earth Elemental, but it was too slow to catch up with them. It could easily have squished them and they knew it, but it wasn't so unfairly overpowered that it could prevent them from escaping.

David J Prokopetz

08-09-2008 04:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218335)

I always liked tossing in a couple monsters way beyond the PCs ability to handle through standard methods (sword and spell and straight-up combat). The important things are to make it very clear the monster is totally out of their league, to make sure there's an obvious escape route, and to make them of incidental importance. Iron golems are perfect for that. Simple-mindedly constrained by the commands of their long-gone creator, they are easy to avoid (just leave the circumscribed area), and with some creativity that's just one of many ways a party could come up with to bypass or even destroy the automaton.

Here we see the origin of those hidden optional bosses in console RPGs that are orders of magnitude tougher than the "real" big bad of the scenario they inhabit, yet inexplicably never have any effect on the broader gameworld if simply left alone.

glass

08-09-2008 07:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218026)

Clear mythological antecedents, stirred up with all kinds of random strangeness.

IMO, that described a most of the coolest things in D&D.

glass.

kelvingreen

08-09-2008 08:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9217653)

(I do have to say, though, that I find it odd there is no Wood Golem in D&D. One of my earliest memories of getting into the fantasy genre was when I was about 10 or so years old and reading one of the Sorcery! Fighting Fantasy gamebooks, which had a particularly vivid scene of an evil enchantress animating a Wood Golem to attack the reader.)

I swear that I remember some monster book featuring wood golems and saying that they're actually animated furniture. I thought it was during 2e, but it may have been *Out of the Pit* now that I think of it.

noisms

08-09-2008 09:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9218743)

I swear that I remember some monster book featuring wood golems and saying that they're actually animated furniture. I thought it was during 2e, but it may have been Out of the Pit now that I think of it.

It may well have been. Actually now that you mention it I think said evil enchantress used a table to make her wood golem...

Sleeper

08-09-2008 09:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9218701)

IMO, that described a most of the coolest things in D&D.

Yep. That, and random crap that only makes sense if dungeons developed their own ecology.

kelvingreen

08-09-2008 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9218849)

It may well have been. Actually now that you mention it I think said evil enchantress used a table to make her wood golem...

Maybe I'll do an *Out of the Pit* cover-to-cover. ;)

DMH

08-09-2008 10:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Not exactly a wood golem, there was a paper golem from Ravenloft (Children of the Night: Created). It was a treant cut down to make magical paper- scrolls and spellbooks. I forgot how it animated, but now it trying to regain all of its parts. The 3rd edition version in the MM IV or V is suped up but flavor wise a pale imitation.

Crinos

08-09-2008 10:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9218913)

Not exactly a wood golem, there was a paper golem from Ravenloft (Children of the Night: Created). It was a treant cut down to make magical paper- scrolls and spellbooks. I forgot how it animated, but now it trying to regain all of its parts. The 3rd edition version in the MM IV or V is suped up but flavor wise a pale imitation.

I once came up with a similar creature for an online fan based web supplement called a Scroll Golem (scrolem?), which was basically a bunch of scrolls over a wooden frame, that was intelligent and could cast the spells off the scrolls it was made with (although if it exhausted all the spells on the scroll, it would lose its magic and die).

I actually made 3 monsters for that supplement: The other two being a 3e update of a 2e monster I made called the Adros (a type of Devil who specialized in gluttony and fattening people up) and the grubblers (normally inoffensive creatures that caused bad luck).

Ratoslov

08-09-2008 11:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The golem is probably the single easiest monster in D&D to think up a new variant.

Think of a material. For extra credit, think of a kind of statuary.

Add a thematic special attack.

Come up with a reason for a wizard to make a animate pile of parmesan cheese.

There you go! You've got a new golem variant.

Sleeper

08-09-2008 11:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9219017)

Think of a material. For extra credit, think of a kind of statuary.

Add a thematic special attack.

Come up with a reason for a wizard to make a animate pile of parmesan cheese.

Appearance: Long and stringy. Strips peel away and flail at the party. The ends are bubbling globs of super-heated cheese.

Special attack: Burns the top of your mouth. Communication is difficult. For the Real Roleplaying Experience, it is recommended that the DM keep a bag of cotton balls by the table. If the player wants to communicate with other players, fill mouth and (try to) chat away.

Ta-da! Now somebody can do the oregano golem :)

Crinos

08-09-2008 11:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9219017)

The golem is probably the single easiest monster in D&D to think up a new variant.

Think of a material. For extra credit, think of a kind of statuary.

Add a thematic special attack.

Come up with a reason for a wizard to make a animate pile of parmesan cheese.

There you go! You've got a new golem variant.

Reminds me of that free adventure they had that featured a Calzone Golem.

Shame that never made it into a monstrous manual.

kelvingreen

08-09-2008 11:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9219027)

Ta-da! Now somebody can do the oregano golem :)

It's more likely to be a Shambling Oregano, surely? ;)

Ratoslov

08-09-2008 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219045)
Reminds me of that free adventure they had that featured a Calzone Golem.

Every time we run that adventure, at least one PC ends up dying to the Calzone Golem. It's not because it's overpowered, it's just dumb luck.

Sleeper

08-09-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9219055)
It's more likely to be a Shambling Oregano, surely? ;)

Parmesan isn't exactly a traditional mineral, either :)

Typing is a very common trick to add variety to traditional monsters in D&D. Dragons come in colors, giants are differentiated by their elemental association, golems are defined by their composite substance, and chimerae and sphinxes had different heads while hydras lost count. What other mythological beasts could be expanded by applying an easily-expandable type? Griffons with exotic hindquarters? Harpies with patterned plumage? Rowan, ash, and oak treants?

David J Prokopetz

08-10-2008 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9219082)
What other mythological beasts could be expanded by applying an easily-expandable type?

Anything based on a dog or possessed of dog-like bits can be "typed" by fiddling with the precise breed of dog involved, off the top of my head. I've seen several examples of this, though nothing that's specific to *D&D* springs readily to mind.

(I did see a pretty convincing interpretation of a Hell Poodle in a not-entirely-serious fan supplement, tho'.)

Sleeper

08-10-2008 01:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9219150)

Anything based on a dog or possessed of dog-like bits can be "typed" by fiddling with the precise breed of dog involved, off the top of my head. I've seen several examples of this, though nothing that's specific to D&D springs readily to mind.

(I did see a pretty convincing interpretation of a Hell Poodle in a not-entirely-serious fan supplement, tho'.)

In that vein, there are also a ton of giant wolves and hounds in various mythologies, though the D&D variants have disorderly types. In the spirit of the wolves that chase eat the sun and the moon, there might be great hounds of other stellar phenomena: comets, falling stars, the firmament, auroras, etc; and wolves of the seasons, adding giant summer, autumn, spring, solstice, and equinox wolves to the traditional winter variety.

6inTruder

08-10-2008 04:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wood Golems were in the Dark Sun MC.

Crinos

08-10-2008 05:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9219799)

Wood Golems were in the Dark Sun MC.

Huh. I never got the Dark Sun MC's, so i guess its an easy one to miss.

Though it kind of figures they'd be from the one place where wood is so friggin scare that having enough to make a golem would bankrupt an adventuring party.

6inTruder

08-10-2008 05:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! (Mr. Kotter!)

I had an odd notion about Gnolls the other day: What if Flinds are actually the females of the species? Everyone tend to assume they're males cause... Well... They got those freaky hyena ciltis and fux balls.

The idea doesn't really go much beyond that twist, but I thought it could be an interesting twist.

Crinos

08-10-2008 05:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9219833)

Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! (Mr. Kotter!)

I had an odd notion about Gnolls the other day: What if Flinds are acctually the females of the species? Everyone tend to assume they're males cause... Well... They got those freaky hyena ciltis and fux balls.

The idea doesn't really go much beyond that twist, but I thought it could be an interesting twist.

You know, in 2e they didn't have female Minotaurs at all, They were produced by curses or by raping human women. But 3e retconned it so Minotaur males and females looked virtually identical.

I suppose the same could be true of 2e gnolls.

6inTruder

08-10-2008 05:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219845)

You know, in 2e they didn't have female Minotaurs at all, They were produced by curses or by raping human women. But 3e retconned it so Minotaur males and females looked virtually identical.

I suppose the same could be true of 2e gnolls.

I'd always assumed it was. But then I decided I wanted Gnolls in the 4ed dungeon I'm working on (Assult on the Mumpires Tomb!) and so lacking in a 4edMM I picked some animal books up at the library (cause it's also gonna have giant bugs and a giant anenome) and reading about hyenas got me thinking about making Gnolls a little more... Hyena-like. So I thought that maybe, as female hyenas are larger than the males and badder D&D humanoids are larger than the less bad, maybe Flinds being an inversion of the basic D&D 'bigger is badder' would also invert the female Gnolls being bigger. So Flinds are the leaders because they are female. But no one really notices cause really who wants to look THAT closely at Gnoll-bits? Other than the ubiquitous "sages"?

Crinos

08-10-2008 05:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9219859)

I'd always assumed it was. But then I decided I wanted Gnolls in the 4ed dungeon I'm working on (Assult on the

Mumpires Tomb!) and so lacking in a 4edMM I picked some animal books up at the library (cause it's also gonna have giant bugs and a giant anenome) and reading about hyenas got me thinking about making Gnolls a little more... Hyena-like. So I thought that maybe, as female hyenas are larger than the males and badder D&D humanoids are larger than the less bad, maybe Flinds being an inversion of the basic D&D 'bigger is badder' would also invert the female Gnolls being bigger. So Flinds are the leaders because they are female. But no one really notices cause really who wants to look THAT closely at Gnoll-bits? Other than the ubiquitous "sages"?

I actually read on a message board somewhere that female Hyena's have so much testosterone that their genitals look like the males, making sex hilarious and childbirth very VERY painful.

JRM

08-10-2008 06:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9218302)

Polymorph other the rust monsters into a harmless portable form, and then deploy along with a dispel magic. They'r a never-leave-home-without-them item, along with green slime in ceramic flasks, and large boulders shrunk down with the item spell.

As soon as you twig the rust monster vs iron golem trick it makes them easy for a prepared party to get rid of them. As soon as your magic-user hits 7th level they can use *Polymorph Other* to transform a cockroach or mouse into a rust monster, no need to wait until 16th level and *Polymorph Other*.

As for flasks of green slime, I'd never have my PC carry something like that unless I was really desperate or was absolutely sure it couldn't break. I was careful enough with flasks of flaming oil, and at least with those you had to contact naked flame and break them to suffer damage. Green slime flasks though, that's just asking for trouble. I'd prefer only to use it if it was made safe with a *Polymorph Other* spell or the like.

Hmm that reminds me of another trick, use *Polymorph Other* to turn Green Slime or Rot Grubs into arrows, shoot them into your foe, *Dispel Magic*.

6inTruder

08-10-2008 07:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219917)

I actually read on a message board somewhere that female Hyena's have so much testosterone that their genitals look like the males, making sex hilarious and childbirth very VERY painful.

Pretty much. But I got it out of a book on African animals. With pictures.

glass

08-10-2008 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9219150)

Anything based on a dog or possessed of dog-like bits can be "typed" by fiddling with the precise breed of dog involved, off the top of my head. I've seen several examples of this, though nothing that's specific to D&D springs readily to mind.

The dog creatures from Savage Coast (Lupins? something like that) were dog humanoids with a bunch of different breeds, IIRC.

glass.

JRM

08-10-2008 07:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9218221)

The catoblepas is the water-buffalo-like critter with the poisonous breath. Also from medieval bestiaries. Alas, that we never got a D&D bonnacon.

There are AD&D stats for the Bonnacon in the Fiend Factory article of an old issue of White Dwarf magazine (#24, April-May 1981). If I recall correctly, there was also a winged variant of the monster that used its "expulsion" to give it rocket-assisted flight.

Alas, they never achieved official status by making it into the original Fiend Folio, which included lots of Fiend Factory monsters, possibly because of time constraints (White Dwarf #24 came out about the same time as Fiend Folio), or maybe someone just thought killer-fart cattle were just too vulgar for TSR.

JRM

08-10-2008 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219845)

But 3e retconned it so Minotaur males and females looked virtually identical.

That's absurd, they should look udderly different.:p

The Last Conformist

08-10-2008 07:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219917)

I actually read on a message board somewhere that female Hyena's have so much testosterone that their genitals look like the males, making sex hilarious and childbirth very VERY painful.

Not merely painful - the death rates for both mothers and cubs are horrendous.

This is the spotted hyena, BTW, which is the species you usually hear about. In the other hyena species (brown, striped, and aardwolf), the females don't have as much testosterone, and consequently have more normal genitals (and lower rates of death in childbirth), and are smaller and less aggressive than the males.

Kakita Kojiro

08-10-2008 09:49 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9220120)

There are AD&D stats for the Bonnacon in the Fiend Factory article of an old issue of White Dwarf magazine (#24, April-May 1981). If I recall correctly, there was also a winged variant of the monster that used its "expulsion" to give it rocket-assisted flight.

rocket-assist bonnacon flight? holy, uh, crud. :eek:

noisms

08-10-2008 11:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Golem, Lesser

Flesh Golem

Frankenstein's monster, basically - a shambling thing made of stitched together corpses and which can emit "a hoarse roar of sorts". (Not altogether like the real Frankenstein's monster, then, who was a pretty loquacious chap.) It strikes me that you could quite easily create a sort of D&D version of 'The Modern Prometheus' by putting in a Flesh Golem gone berserk. Just if you wanted to get all literary-pseud with your orc-slaying. The chance of this happening is reasonably high - 1% cumulative chance per round of combat.

Clay Golem

The original Golem of Jewish myth, though bizarrely rendered here as a Terracotta figurine. (Which kind of works, actually, though the textual description is nothing like the picture - setting it out as what seems almost like a giant clay gorilla.)

As with the Stone and Iron Golems, there's a fair amount of detail about rather obscure spells and their effects, including *move earth* and *earthquake*. Spells like *rock to mud* don't apparently work, though.

This entry is notable for perhaps the strangest example of exception-based design in the whole volume - indeed, in all of D&D: "Damage done by the golem can only be cured by a heal spell from a priest of 17th level or greater." Utterly weird. I don't know if there's some precedent for that in the Rabbi Loew story.

(I've just realised something. The character in China Mieville's *Iron Council* who manipulates golems is called... Judah Low. I can't believe I didn't make the connection before now.)

Naxuul

08-10-2008 11:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9218913)

Not exactly a wood golem, there was a paper golem from Ravenloft (Children of the Night: Created). It was a treant cut down to make magical paper- scrolls and spellbooks. I forgot how it animated, but now it trying to regain all of its parts. The 3rd edition version in the MM IV or V is suped up but flavor wise a pale imitation.

It was actually a pretty cool creature. Azenwrath, the evil wood golem in question, was a evil Treant killed and rendered down into dozens of magical items by a enterprising wizard. But there was a problem: the magic that was inscribed in all the scrolls, staves, idols and wands returned Azenwrath's consciousness from the dead. So after a fireball scroll 'accidently' went off and killed the wizard all the parts of Azenwrath in the workshop came together to form a create with bones made from staves, muscles made from wands and idols and skin made from scrolls. He then proceeded to go on a killing spree looking for the rest of his body.

The moral of the story: If you render a monster down into magical items, make sure it's dead first.;;)

-Naxuul

Crinos

08-10-2008 12:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Don't forget that Clay Golems can haste themselves.

I remember hearing in an X files episode with a Golem, the wounds left by the Golem were filled with clay from its body, which would prevent the wounds from closing and would grow back if attempts were made to scrape it out. I know X files came out after this, but its as good an explanation as any.

noisms

08-10-2008 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9220788)
Don't forget that Clay Golems can haste themselves.

I remember hearing in an X files episode with a Golem, the wounds left by the Golem were filled with clay from its body, which would prevent the wounds from closing and would grow back if attempts were made to scrape it out. I know X files came out after this, but its as good an explanation as any.

Hmm. Makes sense. Kind of.

Cognitive Dissident

08-10-2008 05:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9219017)
Come up with a reason for a wizard to make a animate pile of parmesan cheese.

There you go! You've got a new golem variant.

Because that squad of Bolognese Golems was just a little bit bland on its own.

Cognitive Dissident

08-10-2008 05:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9219845)
You know, in 2e they didn't have female Minotaurs at all, They were produced by curses or by raping human women. But 3e retconned it so Minotaur males and females looked virtually identical.

Even in Dragonlance? Because that would have made the existence of the entire Minotaur culture...problematic.

demiurge1138

08-10-2008 07:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Terry Pratchett has the best clay golems ever. Since they know that the words written in their heads are what govern them, the free-willed clay golems work together to buy other golems and write scrolls of freedom into their heads. The most peaceful, well-organized slave rebellion ever.

I love flesh golems, for the Frankenstein connection. In a game I ran (same one I mentioned earleir with the gnoll

scavenger culture in the Sea of Graves), the villain was a gnome necromancer who had developed a spell to teleport organs out of living people's bodies--so his flesh golem would be as fresh as possible. He did actually succeed in his goal of creating for the awful thing an artificial soul made out of a union of positive and negative energy... and the golem promptly went berzerk, killing him and teaming up with a gestalt soul of all of the necromancer's victims to wreak havoc. Good times.

DMH

08-10-2008 08:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9220788)

I remember hearing in an X files episode with a Golem, the wounds left by the Golem were filled with clay from its body, which would prevent the wounds from closing and would grow back if attempts were made to scrape it out. I know X files came out after this, but its as good an explanation as any.

As I mentioned upthread, I have read the real reason is the author (Mike Nystul?) was drunk when we was writing part of the 1st edition MM.

trippingsatyr

08-10-2008 09:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

One of my favorite characters I played was a golem. It was in a fantasy Savage Worlds game with a D&D flavor. I played a newborn clay golem named Phyl which was short for his full name, Phylactery. He assumed this was his name because when his "father" animated him, he called him his phylactery. The character was hilarious cause he was a muscle man with the mind of a 6 year old.

sim_james

08-10-2008 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9214715)

Yeah. This is getting off topic but I wish the man would stop it with the political screeds and just write stories. The Scar was by far his best, because it was just a good adventure tale above all else.

Really? I thought that *The Scar* was his best work because of the multiple layers of metaphor, along with a truly unique and complicated protagonist. :)

noisms

08-11-2008 12:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9221573)

As I mentioned upthread, I have read the real reason is the author (Mike Nystul?) was drunk when we was writing part of the 1st edition MM.

I'd love it if that were true...

It would explain a whole lot else besides.

noisms

08-11-2008 12:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9221700)

Really? I thought that The Scar was his best work because of the multiple layers of metaphor, along with a truly unique and complicated protagonist. :)

Well, that too. But the point remains - he wasn't so overt with all the pseudo-Marxism in *The Scar*, which is why I like it. (Even if you agree with the politics, it can get a bit much. I mean, I want to read a novel, not a propaganda piece.)

Crinos

08-11-2008 01:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9222038)

I'd love it if that were true...

It would explain a whole lot else besides.

There's also the fact that early DnD was very adversarial, DM Vs. PC style of play, mainly because Gary Gygax was a sadistic SOB of a player killer (may he rest in peace).

So a lot of the insane things from 1e were probably brought over to 2e via TSR's overwhelming sense of not giving a damn.

Anywho, can clay golem damage be healed naturally? Thinking about it that "can only be healed by a 17th level cleric" jazz may only apply to magic healing.

sim_james

08-11-2008 09:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9222046)

Well, that too. But the point remains - he wasn't so overt with all the pseudo-Marxism in The Scar, which is why I like it. (Even if you agree with the politics, it can get a bit much. I mean, I want to read a novel, not a propaganda piece.)

Yeah, fair enough. I feel very much the same when it comes to Sheri S. Tepper.

The Scar did have some great world-building bits in it too! The blood empire of the mosquito people, the thaumaturgical underpinnings of the world, the Scar itself... great stuff.

kelvingreen

08-12-2008 06:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9225158)

The Scar did have some great world-building bits in it too! The blood empire of the mosquito people, the thaumaturgical underpinnings of the world, the Scar itself... great stuff.

Yes, that's part of the reason it's my favourite. You seem to find out more about the world in this one novel than anywhere else in his work. You've got the island of the mosquito women, the Deep One-esque fifsh beasties and their undersea empire, and of course the brilliant undead kingdom of High Cromlech. Great stuff.

Er, golems. Yeah.

noisms

08-12-2008 02:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Golems, Ravenloft Oddballs

Bone Golem

This is essentially an animated pile of bones which I think was mainly designed as a way for DMs to be able to say, "Ah ha! You thought it was undead didn't you?" when the party cleric steps forward with his holy symbol. And gets squished. They are immune to all magic except for *shatter* spells, and are generally pretty badass - one of the most powerful types of Golem. Rather ridiculously, "Once every three rounds, the bone golem may throw back its head and issue a hideous laugh that causes all those who hear it to make fear and horror checks. Those who fail either check are paralyzed and cannot move for 2-12 rounds. Those who fail both checks are instantly stricken dead with fear." I'm all

for instadeath, but even I recognise instadeath through *hideous laughter* is a bit much.

Doll Golem

These are basically animated children's toys which jump at you and bite you. Once this has happened you laugh yourself to death. Sounds like something lifted directly from a horror film, but I can't think which one.

Gargoyle Golem

Rather obviously, an animated gargoyle statue. It can leap up to 100' (!), and its main trick is to turn people to stone with its fists. It's impressive how many of the golem oddballs have instakill attacks.

Glass Golem

A figure made out of stained glass, which regenerates when in direct sunlight and generally just hits you with its sword - although it can also cast *prismatic spray* spells. This is one of my favourite Golems. The idea of a knight in a sheet of stained glass suddenly stepping out from the window to attack a party of adventurers is very cool.

Necrophidius Golem

The 'Death Worm' - basically a skull on the end of a snake skeleton, judging by the picture - which does a 'Dance of Death' to hypnotize opponents into unconscious submission.

Scarecrow Golem

I've always been afraid of scarecrows, ever since an episode of the popular Australian kids show *Round the Twist* which I saw when I was about eight years old. So the image of a scarecrow going apeshit and chasing people around while cackling insanely is a particularly resonant one for me. Their shtick is to paralyse people with their gaze. On occasion they can gain sentience - whereupon they go on psychopathic killing sprees.

Crinos

08-12-2008 02:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ah the Ravenloft Golems. It's easy to see why Ravenloft was so popular back in the day; after Planescape it had the coolest monsters.

It's a shame they left the machine and Zombie Golems out of the MM proper. But hey, they had to make due with what they did.

And how unfair is it that they mention making fear and horror checks without first saying what those things ARE. I mean COME ON.

And, guess I was wrong: Here we have the only other type of Golem that can go berzerk: Ol Pumpkinhead.

The Ravenloft Appendix had another sort of killer Scarecrow monster that wasn't a Golem, only this one laid a curse on you that made you a walking bug magnet.

Man that settles it, first thing I'm doing when I get paid is replenishing my 2e monster manual collection.

kelvingreen

08-12-2008 05:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)

These are basically animated children's toys which jump at you and bite you. Once this has happened you laugh yourself to death. Sounds like something lifted directly from a horror film, but I can't think which one.

Child's Play is the obvious one, and the doll golem even looks a lot like Chucky, but I think the *MM* may predate the film. Not sure.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)

Rather obviously, an animated gargoyle statue.

Only in *D&D* would you get gargoyles which look like statues *and* animated statues of gargoyles!

Quote:

I've always been afraid of scarecrows, ever since an episode of the popular Australian kids show *Round the Twist* which I saw when I was about eight years old. So the image of a scarecrow going apeshit and chasing people around while cackling insanely is a particularly resonant one for me. Their shtick is to paralyse people with their gaze. On occasion they can gain sentience - whereupon they go on psychopathic killing sprees.

Definitely the best imagery of the lot. Killer scarecrows are always a sign of scary fun to be had.

Wakboth

08-12-2008 05:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9229344)

And how unfair is it that they mention making fear and horror checks without first saying what those things ARE. I mean COME ON.

That's a recurrent issue with the *MM*, and caused by its omnibus nature. A bit more editing would have done the book good.

JasonK

08-12-2008 05:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9229344)

Its a shame they left the machine and Zombie Golems out of the MM proper. But hey, they had to make due with what they did.

Between the missing machine golems and the present scarecrows, I always assumed they were intentionally going for a Wizard of Oz reference, much like Castlevania: Symphony of the Night later did. Am I alone in this?

Quote:

And how unfair is it that they mention making fear and horror checks without first saying what those things ARE. I mean COME ON.

Ah, I'm very sorry that someone beat me to pointing that out...

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9229686)

Only in D&D would you get gargoyles which look like statues and animated statues of gargoyles!

Indeed. Seems needlessly redundant, to me...

~ jason

JRM

08-12-2008 07:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)

Golems, Ravenloft Oddballs

Glass Golem

A figure made out of stained glass, which regenerates when in direct sunlight and generally just hits you with its sword - although it can also cast prismatic spray spells. This is one of my favourite Golems. The idea of a knight in a sheet of stained glass suddenly stepping out from the window to attack a party of adventurers is very cool.

Yup, it was also very cool when they did it in ***Young Sherlock Holmes*** as ILM's first 'photorealistic' computer generated character. I remember reading the Glass Golem entry in a Ravenloft book for the first time and suspecting they got the idea from that film, since it came out a few years earlier.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)
Necrophidius Golem

The 'Death Worm' - basically a skull on the end of a snake skeleton, judging by the picture - which does a 'Dance of Death' to hypnotize opponents into unconscious submission.

The Necrophidius first entered official canon in the original Fiend Folio, so it predates Ravenloft. If I remember correctly, it's first appearance in 2nd edition AD&D was as a Ravenloft monster though.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)
Scarecrow Golem

I've always been afraid of scarecrows, ever since an episode of the popular Australian kids show Round the Twist which I saw when I was about eight years old. So the image of a scarecrow going apeshit and chasing people around while cackling insanely is a particularly resonant one for me. Their shtick is to paralyse people with their gaze. On occasion they can gain sentience - whereupon they go on psychopathic killing sprees.

Apropos of very little, there's a great scarecrow golem in the Danish fantasy film ***Island of Lost Souls***. The best picture I could find of it after a brief internet search was in **this review** - or just **click here** to link directly to it. Unfortunately the picture doesn't do it justice, imagine it leaping around like a malevolent spider-monkey while making eerie clattering sounds.

EDIT: You can catch a few glimpses of it in the trailers (see **here** for the original Danish trailer or **here** for the German version). There's also an **official website**, but I have no idea what it says, since it's all in Danish.

Crinos

08-12-2008 11:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

IIRC: The Ravenloft creators actually do say that the Glass Golem was inspired by Young Sherlock Holmes, as was the assassin Imp (I've never seen the movie, so I cannot comment).

demiurge1138

08-13-2008 02:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I recall the illustration of the Doll and Bone golems freaking me out lots when I was a wee one.

Crinos

08-13-2008 03:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The funny thing is the doll golem picture shows THREE golems: The baby doll with the pin, the voodoo teddy bear, and the little copper action figure in the corner.

Still don't get why they didn't use the machine and Zombie golems though. Must have been constrained for space at that point.

kelvingreen

08-13-2008 04:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9231774)

The funny thing is the doll golem picture shows THREE golems: The baby doll with the pin, the voodoo teddy bear, and the little copper action figure in the corner.

It's one of the more useful pieces of art in the *MM*, I think. I know that I often forget that doll golems need not necessarily be literally dolls; they can also be stuffed toys, and little toy statues, and all sorts. So the image is a good reminder of that.

Brutus

08-13-2008 10:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9229318)

Scarecrow Golem

I've always been afraid of scarecrows, ever since an episode of the popular Australian kids show Round the Twist which I saw when I was about eight years old. So the image of a scarecrow going apeshit and chasing people around while cackling insanely is a particularly resonant one for me. Their shtick is to paralyse people with their gaze. On occasion they can gain sentience - whereupon they go on psychopathic killing sprees.

I wasn't scared of them until that "Scary Stories" book when I was little. Those illustrations still creep me out. How'd you like to see **that** thing coming at you? To skin you. Nice.

Crinos

08-13-2008 11:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brutus (Post 9233663)

*I wasn't scared of them until that "Scary Stories" book when I was little. Those illustrations still creep me out. How'd you like to see **that** thing coming at you? To skin you. Nice.*

Gets even scarier when you realized that scarecrow golems are pumpkin headed:

*Keep away from Pumpkinhead, Unless you're tired of living,
His enemies are mostly dead, He's mean and unforgiving,
Laugh at him and you're undone, But in some dreadful fashion,
Vengeance, he considers fun, And plans it with a passion,
Time will not erase or blot, A plot that he has brewing,
It's when you think that he's forgot, He'll conjure your undoing,
Bolted doors and windows barred, Guard dogs prowling in the yard,
Won't protect you in your bed, Nothing will, from Pumpkinhead.*

Brutus

08-13-2008 11:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9233795)

Gets even scarier when you realized that scarecrow golems are pumpkin headed:

*Keep away from Pumpkinhead, Unless you're tired of living,
His enemies are mostly dead, He's mean and unforgiving,
Laugh at him and you're undone, But in some dreadful fashion,
Vengeance, he considers fun, And plans it with a passion,
Time will not erase or blot, A plot that he has brewing,
It's when you think that he's forgot, He'll conjure your undoing,
Bolted doors and windows barred, Guard dogs prowling in the yard,
Won't protect you in your bed, Nothing will, from Pumpkinhead.*

Is that from the movie? I never saw it. :(

This second thread is up to 400 and we're not out of the G's yet. This is the most epic thread series ever. That's not even counting the fuss I'm going to make over gremlins.

Crinos

08-13-2008 11:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brutus (Post 9233824)

Is that from the movie? I never saw it. :(

This second thread is up to 400 and we're not out of the G's yet. This is the most epic thread series ever. That's not even counting the fuss I'm going to make over gremlins.

Me neither, cept for bits and pieces, got this from someones signature on another board.

But yeah, this is the same poem from the film.

Also: I will definitely join you in the gremlin fussing.

Crinos

08-13-2008 03:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

[Monstrous Manual: the site](#)

Now I feel a bit foolish for buying a copy of the book for five bucks

JasonK

08-13-2008 03:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Holy hell.

I wish I'd had that site earlier, so I could've noted all of the pictures as we were talking about them; now I forget what we ere referencing! Aaugh!

~ jason

Brutus

08-13-2008 05:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9234550)

Monstrous Manual: the site

Now I feel a bit foolish for buying a copy of the book for five bucks

I traded a shadowrun book I didn't want for it in highschool. Your fiver isn't wasted. Like any good bibliomancer, *you must have the actual book*. It's just not the same otherwise. :)

noisms

08-13-2008 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brutus (Post 9234841)

I traded a shadowrun book I didn't want for it in highschool. Your fiver isn't wasted. Like any good bibliomancer, you must have the actual book. It's just not the same otherwise. :)

Absolutely.

pdfs and webpages are no substitute.

Crinos

08-13-2008 08:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9234877)

Absolutely.

pdfs and webpages are no substitute.

Actually the five bucks I spent was on a PDF. Thats how I get all my books these days.

MadWritter

08-13-2008 08:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9235150)

Actually the five bucks I spent was on a PDF. Thats how I get all my books these days.

Can I give you a laugh point for this?

noisms

08-13-2008 10:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9235150)

Actually the five bucks I spent was on a PDF. Thats how I get all my books these days.

Ha. I guess I walked into *that* one. ;)

Yeah, \$5 MMs must be thin on the ground these days. I still have mine in relatively good condition from the old days, but it's developed that weird 'old book' smell from all the time it's spent in my parent's loft.

Crinos

08-14-2008 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MadWriter (Post 9235201)
Can I give you a laugh point for this?

You may.

JRM

08-14-2008 04:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9230689)
IIRC: The Ravenloft creators actually do say that the Glass Golem was inspired by Young Sherlock Holmes, as was the assassin Imp (I've never seen the movie, so I cannot comment).

As for the assassin imps, there's a sequence in the movie where an archeologist is admiring a couple of little bronze devil statues that he sees come alive and scurry inside his clothing, causing him to fatally stab himself in a bid to kill them.

The glass golem and the other (non-human) monsters in Young Sherlock Holmes were actually just hallucinations caused by a Sinister Oriental Drug which incites its victims to kill themselves in a bid to escape appalling phantom.

noisms

08-14-2008 10:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Almost at the end of the 'G' mega-entries. Hooray! (Can you believe the G section stretched from the end of the last thread all the way to half way through this one?)

Golems, Stone Variants

These are basically less powerful cousins of the Stone Golem, whose usual purpose is to perform sentinel or guardian duties.

Caryatid Column

The Caryatid Column ("a supporting column sculptured in the form of a draped female figure", according to dictionary.com) is essentially a beautiful stone pillar carved to look like a woman with a sword. But beware, because as soon as you do That Which You Are Not Supposed To (whatever it may be) she'll come to life and start hitting you with that sword.

We haven't mentioned XP in a very long while, but this is another stage at which I have to wonder whether the values given in the MM aren't irredeemably broken. 420 XP seems like peanuts for a Caryatid Column, which has tough magical resistances and causes weapons to shatter 25% of the time when hitting it. Why it is only worth 420 XP (the same amount as the woeful and boring Stone Guardian described below) is beyond me.

Juggernaut

Sadly, not a Juggernaut of Khorne, but a rather vague "stone vehicle of some sort". Its main (and indeed only) modus operandi is to roll over you and make you go splat. I picture something along the lines of a Babylonian Ziggurat on wheels, for some reason.

Juggernauts also sometimes apparently combine with mimics, which allows them to grow up to six multi-purpose arms.

Stone Guardian

This is possibly the most boring monster in the book - even the designers seem to completely lack enthusiasm for it: they don't even give it a description! It's the poor man's Stone Golem, essentially. A big stone guy who hits you. For the less discerning evil mage.

demiurge1138

08-14-2008 03:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I never really got why the Stone Guardian was in there. So lower-level parties can fight big stone dudes too?

noisms

08-14-2008 04:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9239153)

I never really got why the Stone Guardian was in there. So lower-level parties can fight big stone dudes too?

I suppose it's the goblin to the Stone Golem's orc.

Crinos

08-14-2008 04:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9238440)

Almost at the end of the 'G' mega-entries. Hooray! (Can you believe the G section stretched from the end of the last thread all the way to half way through this one?)

I wouldn't say we're almost done yet: We still have 6 GR entries to get through, including 2 Gremlin entries, Griffons, Grimlock, Grell and Gripli. Plus Gorgons (Isn't it weird that the entry right after the stone golem variants is a monster that turns you to stone?)

Yep, we still have miles to go before we sleep.

(BTW: majorly looking forward to the Hag entry)

Wakboth

08-14-2008 04:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9238440)

Juggernaut

Sadly, not a Juggernaut of Khorne, but a rather vague "stone vehicle of some sort". Its main (and indeed only) modus operandi is to roll over you and make you go splat. I picture something along the lines of a Babylonian Ziggurat on wheels, for some reason.

That's more interesting than my mental image, which is basically a steamroller made of stone. (Along the line of the rock creature's bike in *The Neverending Story*.)

Quote:

Stone Guardian

This is possibly the most boring monster in the book - even the designers seem to completely lack enthusiasm for it they don't even give it a description! It's the poor man's Stone Golem, essentially. A big stone guy who hits you. For the less discerning evil mage.

IIRC, this one appeared first in the 1e MM2. And, for some reason, I think it was modeled after the stone guest in the Don Juan legend... If true, that didn't make the transition to 2e.

Littleredfox

08-14-2008 05:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9238440)

420 XP seems like peanuts for a Caryatid Column, which has tough magical resistances and causes weapons to shatter 25% of the time when hitting it.

The weapons shattering bit can be useful to the party and may thus lower the XP value.

After all how else are you going to get rid of those cursed weapons.:)

kelvingreen

08-14-2008 05:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9238440)

Juggernaut

Sadly, not a Juggernaut of Khorne, but a rather vague "stone vehicle of some sort". Its main (and indeed only) modus operandi is to roll over you and make you go splat. I picture something along the lines of a Babylonian Ziggurat on wheels, for some reason.

Juggernauts also sometimes apparently combine with mimics, which allows them to grow up to six multi-purpose arms.

Completely mental, and as such, I love it. I can imagine an orcish warband that's somehow enslaved one of these and goes charging around the countryside with it, hanging off the edges like a bunch of GIs on a jeep. While it's practical in getting them from looting point A to pillaging point B, they mainly love it because it's *fast*. They may even have painted it red. ;)

MadWriter

08-14-2008 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9235945)

You may.

+1 Laugh Point to Crinos from MadWriter. Billed in full.

noisms

08-14-2008 07:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Littleredfox (Post 9239384)

The weapons shattering bit can be useful to the party and may thus lower the XP value.

After all how else are you going to get rid of those cursed weapons.?)

Ah, you've played this game before, haven't you? ;)

Sleeper

08-14-2008 10:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9239280)

IIRC, this one appeared first in the 1e MM2. And, for some reason, I think it was modeled after the stone guest in the Don Juan legend... If true, that didn't make the transition to 2e.

I believe the first appearance of the stone guardians was in L1: The Secret of Bone Hill. Low level module, low level stone golem equivalent designed specifically to guard an area. Along with the spectator, the cheap low-level (and not evil) equivalent of the beholder. Also designed specifically to play watchdog.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9239280)

That's more interesting than my mental image, which is basically a steamroller made of stone. (Along the line of the rock creature's bike in The Neverending Story.)

The juggernaut first appeared in T1-4: The Temple of Elemental Evil. There was art. I don't have my copy in front of me, but IIRC they were big pillars on stone wheels with all kinds of odd heads on extension poles. Sort of like an unAmerindian totem pole, if the heads could shoot out and pin you to the wall while you're trying to rescue your buddy who's being ground underneath its wheels. It's been a while, though. I could be creatively misremembering.

Canis Major

08-14-2008 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

No, I believe the Juggernaut first appeared in the Tomb of Horrors as a trap component.

Sleeper

08-15-2008 12:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xaos (Post 9240398)

No, I believe the Juggernaut first appeared in the Tomb of Horrors as a trap component.

Was it a monster, or just a trap?

Canis Major

08-15-2008 12:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

<http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/To...HGraphic23.jpg>

I think it could be attacked and destroyed, but my memory is hazy.

Cultist of Sooty

08-15-2008 12:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

That picture does seem to suggest that whoever wrote the monster up for D&D was aware of the origins of the "juggernaut".

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wikipedia

The word is derived from the Sanskrit Jagannātha (meaning "Lord of the universe") which is one of the many names of Krishna from the ancient Vedic scriptures of India. One of the most famous of Indian temples is the Jagannath Temple in Puri, Orissa, which has the Ratha Yatra (chariot procession), an annual procession of chariots carrying the murtis/statues of Jagannāth (Krishna), Subhadra and Baladeva (Krishna's elder brother). During the British colonial era, Christian missionaries promulgated a fallacy that Hindu devotees of Krishna were lunatic fanatics who threw themselves under the wheels of these chariots in order to attain salvation. Such a description can also be found in the popular fourteenth-century work "The Travels of Sir John Mandeville." In rare instances in the festival's past, people had been crushed accidentally as the massive 45 foot tall, multi-ton chariot slipped out of control, with others suffering injury in the resulting stampedes. This sight led the Britons of the time to contrive the word "Juggernaut" to refer to examples of unstoppable, crushing forces.

In modern times, the government officers and temple priests managing the festival take elaborate precautions to protect people from injury during these processions.

And a picture of it, from 1851:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...Book_11921.jpg

Sleeper

08-15-2008 12:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xaos (Post 9240484)

I think it could be attacked and destroyed, but my memory is hazy.

I seem to recall an instant-death mechanic rather than an normal attack, but it's terribly fuzzy. The T1-4 version was definitely a full stat block. In the back, along with the fungus queen and the swords that the plundered the English language for every possible synonym of the word "answerer" (which was also stolen from mythology -- Celtic this time).

Lord Shark

08-15-2008 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I'm pretty sure the Tomb of Horrors one was just part of a trap (walk into a corridor full of knockout gas, fall asleep, and that thing comes out and rolls over you), and the juggernaut was first statted up in T1-4.

I also vaguely recall that the T1-4 one resembled a giant horse's head on wheels, although in this case I may be confusing it with the juggernaut from the Archon computer games from back in the '80s...

Crinos

08-15-2008 01:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xaos (Post 9240484)

<http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/To...HGraphic23.jpg>

I think it could be attacked and destroyed, but my memory is hazy.

That is the most awesome thing ever. Gary Gygax was an evil effin genius.

Canis Major

08-15-2008 01:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

It looks like the juggernaut also appeared in X4: Master of the Desert Nomads (David Cook, 1983).

Sleeper

08-15-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xaos (Post 9240770)

It looks like the juggernaut also appeared in X4: Master of the Desert Nomads (David Cook, 1983).

That definitely predates (the much delayed) T1-4 (by two years), though it would be interesting to compare the two stat blocks. The Basic D&D line and the AD&D line often had very different takes.

demiurge1138

08-15-2008 01:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9239413)

Completely mental, and as such, I love it. I can imagine an orcish warband that's somehow enslaved one of these an. goes charging around the countryside with it, hanging off the edges like a bunch of GIs on a jeep. While it's practical in getting them from looting point A to pillaging point B, they mainly love it because it's fast. They may even have painted it red. ;)

They did that in *Expedition to the Ruins of Castle Greyhawk*, the official Last Greyhawk Product Ever (the good 3e one, not the shitty "comedy" module *Castle Greyhawk*). Only instead of orcs, the passengers were redcap expatriates from Dungeonland.

kelvingreen

08-15-2008 03:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9240872)

Only instead of orcs, the passengers were redcap expatriates from Dungeonland.

Not as much fun as orc 'ooligans then. ;)

DMH

08-15-2008 05:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

They had no problem taking some critters from BD&D for the MM, I wonder why the drolem wasn't one of them. The most powerful construct, made from bits of monsters adventurers were expected to slay and a challenge for players- who could ask more?

Crinos

08-15-2008 06:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9241902)

They had no problem taking some critters from BD&D for the MM, I wonder why the drolem wasn't one of them. The most powerful construct, made from bits of monsters adventurers were expected to slay and a challenge for players- who could ask more?

Same reason they didn't use the last two ravenloft Golems: Space constraints.

They can only fit so many monsters into one book.

Sides which, they get more money by putting the left out creatures into other books (and of course, hinting about the new monsters in the MM, like they did for the Baatezu and Tanar'ri)

JRM

08-15-2008 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9240805)

That definitely predates (the much delayed) T1-4 (by two years), though it would be interesting to compare the two stat blocks. The Basic D&D line and the AD&D line often had very different takes.

From what I remember of it, the X4 version of the Juggernaut was a siege engine on wheels, like a small fort with a battering-ram prow.

Here are a couple of pictures of what one looks like from the covers of **Master of the Desert Nomads** and **Adventures in Blackmoor**

Don't have that module so I can't quote the original stat block, but there's a 3rd edition conversion on Enworld [here](#). It also appears in the 3rd edition version of Monster Manual II.

noisms

08-16-2008 10:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gorgon

No, not a woman with snakes on her head who turns you to stone (that's the medusa), but a big metal bull with bad breath which turns you to stone. Apparently there's some reason for this, which a more informed reader will tell you about.

This is a nice monster, but almost spoiled by the silly image conjured up by the line that "Gorgons walk on two hooves if necessary". Suddenly all I can think about is a cow tottering around on its hind legs snorting at people.

Anyway, the designers can be forgiven, because the Gorgon has a) instakill murder breath; b) a corpse that can be used to make stuff (the scales can be forged into a special coat of scale mail or ground up to make scrolls of petrification, and the blood can 'seal an area against astral and ethereal intrusion'); c) droppings that sometimes contain treasure it has accidentally eaten. (The last is easily my favourite. Next time I play in a game my character is going to spend the whole time checking out monster manure for gems.)

An adventure hook is provided in the form of hints that the stone statues left by rampaging Gorgons often contain, inside, the treasures of the unfortunate victim. Cue quest to the Gorgon's lair to try to recover ancient artifact set in the petrified body of a dead adventurer... Perfect if the characters are low level, and so have to sneak in without the Gorgon noticing.

I feel good about this entry. It's been a while since we've come across a monster which can fit into my upcoming supplement - Monsters Whose Corpses Can Be Turned Into Useful Stuff, Especially Armour, Vol. 1.

Crinos

08-16-2008 10:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Well, as I said above, I read somewhere (I think it was an issue of Ranger Rick) that there were two gorgon myths: The snake haired woman from Greece, and a Bull with Killer breath from some other mythology. Sadly I can find zero evidence to back up my claims, so for now just ignore my sober ramblings.

JasonK

08-16-2008 10:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9247741)

An adventure hook is provided in the form of hints that the stone statues left by rampaging Gorgons often contain, inside, the treasures of the unfortunate victim. Cue quest to the Gorgon's lair to try to recover ancient artifact set in the petrified body of a dead adventurer... Perfect if the characters are low level, and so have to sneak in without the Gorgon noticing.

Serious question:

Why is it that when gorgons (or medusae, for that matter) turn someone into stone, their gear also turns to stone with them? Makes no sense to me and, to be honest, seems a lot less cool. I think there's a certain horror associated with coming on a standing suit of armor, sword raised to strike, or a set of robes fluttering in the wind, their wearer holding a staff, arms outstretched, only to realize that the person wearing them is made of immobile stone. Much worse than "some strange statues - they all seem terrified", in my opinion.

Crinos

08-16-2008 10:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9247778)

Serious question:

Why is it that when gorgons (or medusae, for that matter) turn someone into stone, their gear also turns to stone with them? Makes no sense to me and, to be honest, seems a lot less cool. I think there's a certain horror associated with coming on a standing suit of armor, sword raised to strike, or a set of robes fluttering in the wind, their wearer holding a staff, arms outstretched, only to realize that the person wearing them is made of immobile stone. Much worse than "some strange statues - they all seem terrified", in my opinion.

~ jason

My guess is the Gorgons petrifying breath is magic and works on contact, forgoing the need to breath to be affected.

But hey, its your campaign, do what you want.

noisms

08-16-2008 11:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9247778)

Serious question:

Why is it that when gorgons (or medusae, for that matter) turn someone into stone, their gear also turns to stone with them? Makes no sense to me and, to be honest, seems a lot less cool. I think there's a certain horror associated with coming on a standing suit of armor, sword raised to strike, or a set of robes fluttering in the wind, their wearer holding a staff, arms outstretched, only to realize that the person wearing them is made of immobile stone. Much worse than "some strange statues - they all seem terrified", in my opinion.

~ jason

Interesting. The Gorgon's breath is a cone, so it could affect everything within that cone - but in that case, surely, it would turn all the vegetation within the cone to stone too.

The medusa, however, works on sight - so in that case your idea works much better: whatever *looks* at her is turned to stone. Which obviously doesn't include armour, which can't look at anything.

Crinos

08-16-2008 11:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9247936)

The medusa, however, works on sight - so in that case your idea works much better: whatever looks at her is turned to stone. Which obviously doesn't include armour, which can't look at anything.

Well, the original Medusa's petrification power was due to a divine curse. So it could be that the God that cursed the original medusa just decreed that "anyone who saw a medusa would turn to stone" and didn't bother to differentiate between the person and their possessions.

JRM

08-16-2008 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9247980)

Well, the original Medusa's petrification power was due to a divine curse. So it could be that the God that cursed the original medusa just decreed that "anyone who saw a medusa would turn to stone" and didn't bother to differentiate between the person and their possessions.

It's the blessing within the curse! If your possessions also turn to stone it means your companions can't loot your petrified body, they have to *Stone To Flesh* you to get your stuff. Of course, if they're evil, they may knock your 'stoned' head off first.;;)

Sleeper

08-16-2008 07:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9247778)

Serious question:

Why is it that when gorgons (or medusae, for that matter) turn someone into stone, their gear also turns to stone with them? Makes no sense to me and, to be honest, seems a lot less cool. I think there's a certain horror associated with coming on a standing suit of armor, sword raised to strike, or a set of robes fluttering in the wind, their wearer holding a staff, arms outstretched, only to realize that the person wearing them is made of immobile stone. Much worse than "some strange statues - they all seem terrified", in my opinion.

~ jason

Clothing decomposes, armor rusts, and straps rot and snap. Old gorgon dens would be like walking into a cave and finding a random collection of anatomically correct Michaelangelo nudes in dramatic poses, with expressions of shock or horror on their faces. Some stained with rust, and most surrounded by a circle of scattered tatters of cloth and leather, which gradually becomes a film of deliquescing organic material, and then just a discoloration on the rocks with a few of the more durable objects hidden away in crevices.

And what *kind* of stone do gorgons turn people into? I'm imagining a veined marble for medusae; perhaps a harsher stone for the armored unglut.

JRM

08-17-2008 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9248796)

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And what kind of stone do gorgons turn people into? I'm imagining a veined marble for medusae; perhaps a harsher stone for the armored unglut.

In my campaign the stone a petrified victim is made out of is porous inside, like pumice, so that their body weighs the same as it did when they were organic. That means it's pretty frangible for a piece of stone. The surface of the petrified victim's skin is more or less as smooth as they were in life, I think most of the vacuoles inside the victim are too small to see with the naked eye - maybe the size of living cells, indeed they may replace the stoned victim's living cells.

Crinos

08-17-2008 03:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9248796)

Clothing decomposes, armor rusts, and straps rot and snap. Old gorgon dens would be like walking into a cave and finding a random collection of anatomically correct Michaelangelo nudes in dramatic poses, with expressions of shock or horror on their faces. Some stained with rust, and most surrounded by a circle of scattered tatters of cloth and leather, which gradually becomes a film of deliquescing organic material, and then just a discoloration on the rocks with a few of the more durable objects hidden away in crevices.

Well, according to the Gorgon entry, it's believed that Gorgons eat the statues they create (either by pulverizing it into dust with their teeth or by turning it back to flesh with their saliva as they eat it). So you probably

wouldn't see any whole statues in a Gorgon lair anyways.

Only Medusa and Beholders keep petrified victims as trophies.

Sleeper

08-17-2008 06:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9249664)

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Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9249719)

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Perhaps exfoliating using pieces of gorgonstone is considered absolutely essential for truly *exquisite* skin by the pampered courtesans of the great decadent empires in the south. They pay high prices, and use it directly on the rough skin on the soles of their feet, and have lesser slaves grind it into salves composed of many exotic ingredients like honey and pomegranate for use on their face and other more delicate body parts.

A secondary market quickly sprang up that used captive medusas to dispose of feeble or crippled slaves, but this was quickly merged with a rather unusual form of entertainment. Now, the occasional gladiator faces a captive medusa in a duel to the death. To ensure the safety of the audience (though the slightly chance for death is what draws the *huge* crowds), the medusa is caged in a special mirror-ringed platform that is hauled by great lobotomized dragons with hobbled wings into the center of the great amphitheatre. The cunning use of reflection allows to the audience to watch the spectacle without harm (a legion of blindfolded soldiers is on hand for eventualities), as the desperate captured barbarian scrambles to keep an eye on her deadly opponent amid the disorientating dance of reflections. Because while the adamant mirrors are set up so the duel is almost like a motion picture, moving from screen to screen (or mirror to mirror), to the outside observer; from the inside, the cage is like a funhouse with perception shifting wildly every time a combatant moves, and never is it clear which is the real medusa and which is just a reflected image.

JRM

08-17-2008 08:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9249719)

Well, according to the Gorgon entry, its believed that Gorgons eat the statues they create (either by pulverizing it into dust with their teeth or by turning it back to flesh with their saliva as they eat it). So you probably wouldn't see any whole statues in a Gorgon lair anyways.

Only Medusa and Beholders keep petrified victims as trophies.

A D&D Medusa can eat its petrified victim if she's mated to a **Maedar**, the male of the species. All Maedar have an innate *Stone to Flesh* ability, so they can break pieces off their mate's petrified victims and turn these portions edible. Those statues the medusae are keeping may be a larder, not trophies.

Crinos

08-17-2008 08:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9250353)

*A D&D Medusa can eat its petrified victim if she's mated to a **Maedar**, the male of the species. All Maedar have an innate Stone to Flesh ability, so they can break pieces off their mate's petrified victims and turn these portions edible. Those statues the medusae are keeping may be a larder, not trophies.*

On the same subject, the Basilisk don't have a habitat or ecology in the MM, but I assume since they're fairly dangerous without their gaze, they only use the gaze for self defense, not hunting. The same goes for Cockatrice, who hunt for small insects and lizards and don't really need petrification.

As for Medusa and Maedar, that may be the case, but since Maedar are so rare compared to Medusa, the more pragmatic Medusa will most likely destroy any statues of her victims so they can't be restored or warn intruders of her presence, and perhaps keep the more interesting statues as trophies (as Beholders are wont to do).

Sleeper

08-17-2008 08:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9250353)

*A D&D Medusa can eat its petrified victim if she's mated to a **Maedar**, the male of the species. All Maedar have an innate Stone to Flesh ability, so they can break pieces off their mate's petrified victims and turn these portions edible. Those statues the medusae are keeping may be a larder, not trophies.*

And, apparently, since medusas turn any worn or carried clothing and metal to stone as well, maedar can convert those now-lithoid swords and pieces of armor into meals. I wonder which is tastier... stone-preserved twice flesh, or steel-turned-stone-turned-flesh?

David J Prokopetz

08-17-2008 08:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9250401)

And, apparently, since medusas turn any worn or carried clothing and metal to stone as well, maedar can convert those now-lithoid swords and pieces of armor into meals. I wonder which is tastier... stone-preserved twice flesh, or steel-turned-stone-turned-flesh?

I swear, the fact that *stone to flesh* can affect stone that was never flesh in the first place is the source of more creepy strategies in 1E and 2E than just about any other spell. Isn't the idea of turning a stone wall to meat and carving a bloody tunnel through it explicitly mentioned in the spell description?

Sleeper

08-17-2008 08:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9250407)

I swear, the fact that stone to flesh can affect stone that was never flesh in the first place is the source of more creep strategies in 1E and 2E than just about any other spell. Isn't the idea of turning a stone wall to meat and carving a bloody tunnel through it explicitly mentioned in the spell description?

Piers Anthony may not be a very good author, but there was an entertaining bit in *Crowl Lye* where a massive stone to flesh spell goes off, and turns the top of a mountain into a huge piece of flesh. Unlike in D&D, it was apparently living — but brainless and organless and without eyes or any senses except touch. So trapped in the darkness of its own mind, it did the only thing it could — it started instinctively and blindly thrashing around, which caused a series of avalanches. I imagine afterward the scavengers had quite a feast.

JRM

08-18-2008 08:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9250401)

And, apparently, since medusas turn any worn or carried clothing and metal to stone as well, maedar can convert those now-lithoid swords and pieces of armor into meals. I wonder which is tastier... stone-preserved twice flesh, or steel-turned-stone-turned-flesh?

The steel-turned-stone-turned-flesh shouldn't work, since the reversed petrification spell turns the victims equipment back to their former state. Unless they've carrying something that's made of stone in the firstplace, I

guess. ("Thank you for saving me from petrification, allow me to reward you with these valuable gemstones" . . . pulls a handful of squishy little lumps out of beltpouch . . . "Ewww")

That does beg the question of why a medusa family with a Maedar would need to hunt at all, if they can turn the walls of their cave into meat. I suspect that original rock turned flesh is missing some vital nutritional ingredient(s) (vitamins? fat?) or has too much trace metals to make a healthy diet.

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9250407)

I swear, the fact that stone to flesh can affect stone that was never flesh in the first place is the source of more creep strategies in 1E and 2E than just about any other spell. Isn't the idea of turning a stone wall to meat and carving a bloody tunnel through it explicitly mentioned in the spell description?

Yes, I think that tactic is described in one of the core books, either the Player's Handbook or the 1st edition DMG's "stuff the wizard doesn't know about their spells that will screw them over" section.

Crinos

08-18-2008 08:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9253455)

That does beg the question of why a medusa family with a Maedar would need to hunt at all, if they can turn the walls of their cave into meat. I suspect that original rock turned flesh is missing some vital nutritional ingredient(s) (vitamins? fat?) or has too much trace metals to make a healthy diet.

Or maybe it just tastes bad.

I mean flesh made from stone is probably like spam or something, so I don't think it tastes too good.

Besides which, if you carve too much flesh from the walls of the cave, you could damage the integrity of the cave.

Besides, Medusa and Maedar are evil, do they really need an excuse to hunt and kill?

Sleeper

08-18-2008 10:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9253512)

Besides which, if you carve too much flesh from the walls of the cave, you could damage the integrity of the cave.

Unless they team up with some other monster that understands the basics of structural engineering.

Just imagine a pairing between a band of derro with their not-quite-in-check dementia and a couple of newlywed medusas looking for a place to call their own. Insane artistic sensibilities direct the more sedate maedar into crafting strangely organic and repellent yet beautiful shapes out of the negative space of the rock-turned-flesh. The derro would pair their shock-white hair with glistening white teeth, filed into points, to eat their way out of their starter cave and into a vast underground palace they hunger for (in another sense). As long as they're still hungry, they'll never have to worry about being crowded, so sloppy bellies spilling over belts become desirable. And when the mad architects have a fit and are possessed by an artistic frenzy, and beguile and browbeat the maedar into creating another flesh-tunnel, and yet another, and again and again... to dispose of the surfeit of food, they'd have to carve out huge slabs of raw meat and throw it into a vast crevice, which would soon become infested with scores of mindless scrabbling monsters feeding on the discards. Even when their home has expanded into an enormous and alien network of caves twisting like intestines (or to be more precise, the space left behind by intestines if they grew through rock), it would still be known as the Bloody Caves, for the permanent red stains in the rock and the thin film of gore that seems to cover everything, tracked in from the latest banquet hall slash new wing.

Crinos

08-18-2008 10:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9253835)

Unless they team up with some other monster that understands the basics of structural engineering.

Just imagine a pairing between a band of derro with their not-quite-in-check dementia and a couple of newlywed medusas looking for a place to call their own. Insane artistic sensibilities direct the more sedate maedar into crafting strangely organic and repellent yet beautiful shapes out of the negative space of the rock-turned-flesh. The derro would pair their shock-white hair with glistening white teeth, filed into points, to eat their way out of their starter cave and into a vast underground palace they hunger for (in another sense). As long as they're still hungry, they'll never have to worry about being crowded, so sloppy bellies spilling over belts become desirable. And when the mad architects have a fit and are possessed by an artistic frenzy, and beguile and browbeat the maedar into creating another flesh-tunnel, and yet another, and again and again... to dispose of the surfeit of food, they'd have to carve out huge slabs of raw meat and throw it into a vast crevice, which would soon become infested with scores of mindless scrabbling monsters feeding on the discards. Even when their home has expanded into an enormous and alien network of caves twisting like intestines (or to be more precise, the space left behind by intestines if they grew through rock), it would still be known as the Bloody Caves, for the permanent red stains in the rock and the thin film of gore that seems to cover everything, tracked in from the latest banquet hall slash new wing.

dude.... THAT. WAS. AWESOME.

Its like a dnd module written by Clive Barker!

I am so gonna use that at some point.

Sleeper

08-18-2008 11:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Thanks. The whole mythology surrounding D&D is fascinating, and despite everything that's been published the surface has hardly been scratched.

demiurge1138

08-18-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

My roommate actually ran a character who was a monk turned into a ghoul. Because his monastic vows forbade him harming an animal, he fulfilled his ghoulish hunger by using stone to flesh on granite blocks. He called it "vegan meat".

Crinos

08-18-2008 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

In fact, that idea gives me an idea for a temple to a God of Gluttony run by a Medusa and Maedar who force slaves and cultists to eat themselves into obesity carving out new additions to their temple.

noisms

08-18-2008 12:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Grell

Ah, the Grell. Everybody's favourite look-like-refugees-from-a-bog-standard-STNG-episode monster. Big floating telepathic octopus-brains with tentacles.

In behaviour and society, Grell are a bit like daleks. They roam around saying things like "Human slime!" and "We will destroy you, man flesh!" - or at least they do in my imagination. Divided into workers, 'philosophers' (though one wonders how much philosophising they do other than "Grell are the best, and eat what they like!") and 'patriarchs', they act like a kind of ant or bee colony, with the patriarch acting as the Queen. Odd that it isn't a matriarch, really.

I hate Grell, and I rather dislike the entry, too. For starters, there are the scattering of references to 'ships', which we could really have done without: I assume that what is meant is Spelljammer ships, but it's silly that one should have to make assumptions like that at all. TSR really should have done some editing before just copying and pasting entries from other bestiariums.

But I also can't help but feel they didn't flesh out the Grell nearly enough. Almost the entire entry is given over to descriptions of what the workers do in combat, which is all very well, but doesn't give a DM much else to go on. So, okay, Grell are a bit like Beholders and it's tough to make them interesting. But at least try, guys!

Worst of all, Grell are just really annoying, it has to be said. Their ability to levitate and paralyse is both powerful and irritating, and I can remember many near TPKs at their hands (tentacles?) in games I've played in over the years. On one occasion a party of 12 was wiped out to the last man - a mage - who managed to acid arrow the last of the Grell and was then left to pick up the pieces of 11 dead comrades. We eventually got the Patriarch, though...

Crinos

08-18-2008 12:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I always pegged the Clockwork horrors as the DnD daleks, the Grell are just weird for weirdness sake.

Oddly enough, they made their debut in the original fiend folio, so there's no real reason to use their spelljammer writeup.

Hellzon

08-18-2008 05:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9253455)

The steel-turned-stone-turned-flesh shouldn't work, since the reversed petrification spell turns the victims equipment back to their former state. Unless they've carrying something that's made of stone in the firstplace, I guess. ("Thank you for saving me from petrification, allow me to reward you with these valuable gemstones" . . . pulls a handful of squishy little lumps out of beltpouch . . . "Ewww")

Now I can't stop myself. NetHack has the "Stone to Flesh" spell. If you cast it on yourself, you turn any stone items in your inventory to meat. Gems turn into meatballs. :D

Can't dig with it, though.

demiurge1138

08-18-2008 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I like grell, brains-with-tentacles weird as they are. I like that their philosophy consists mainly of eating stuff. And I like that they're random wandering monsters--unless they have philosophers and lightning lances and all that stuff. There's the implication of multiple grell cultures, when most D&D monsters are all mono-culture.

Apropos of nothing, I once had an idea for a near-future game where mankind finally received signals from alien intelligence... but they were all D&D aberrations. How would man enter the space race when their competitors were illithids, grell, neogi and beholders?

Steve H

08-18-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9254926)

Apropos of nothing, I once had an idea for a near-future game where mankind finally received signals from alien intelligence... but they were all D&D aberrations. How would man enter the space race when their competitors were illithids, grell, neogi and beholders?

That's beautiful :)

I'm trying to remember now how D20 Modern/Urban Arcana handled the aberrations - but I think they just slipped through the same magic portal as everything else in that game.

Sleeper

08-18-2008 09:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9253950)

My roommate actually ran a character who was a monk turned into a ghoul. Because his monastic vows forbade him harming an animal, he fulfilled his ghoulish hunger by using stone to flesh on granite blocks. He called it "vegan meat".

:)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9254132)

Ah, the Grell. Everybody's favourite look-like-refugees-from-a-bog-standard-STNG-episode monster. Big floating telepathic octopus-brains with tentacles.

There was a Star Trek episode with grellalikes? Now I want to see a screencap :). The grell clearly predate the second series, so if there's any copying it's the other way around.

One thing I really disliked about the grell chapter in 3E's *Lords of Madness* is they're no longer giant brains with beaks and tentacles. Rather, they just *look* like giant brains. What is it, some kind of camouflage? How does happening to look like the contents of someone's skull translate into a defense mechanism? Just keeping them as giant brains wouldn't be any less logical, and, well. Giant brains with beaks and tentacles. Much cooler.

DMH

08-18-2008 11:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I don't remember the title, but the episode where the away team ends up in a western (and Checkov dies?) is the only OST alien that is grell like that I can think of.

I don't care for grell and wish the pages in *Lords of Madness* were devoted to some other aberration.

noisms

08-19-2008 12:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9255353)

:)

There was a Star Trek episode with grellalikes? Now I want to see a screencap :). The grell clearly predate the second series, so if there's any copying it's the other way around.

No, but they just *feel* like a Star Trek or Dr. Who monster, do they not?

glass

08-19-2008 12:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9254192)

Oddly enough, they made their debut in the original fiend folio, so there's no real reason to use their spelljammer writeup.

They were also in the Grayhawk MC Appendix for 2e before they were in the SJ one. I always liked them, FWIW, but I've never really done anything with them.

glass.

YojimboC

08-19-2008 03:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've always liked the grell as well and yet never did anything with them. Now I'll have to, of course. A grell enclave in the heart of a yuan-ti city, perhaps? Yeah, that could work.

JRM

08-19-2008 05:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9256594)

I've always liked the grell as well and yet never did anything with them. Now I'll have to, of course. A grell enclave in the heart of a yuan-ti city, perhaps? Yeah, that could work.

I've used grell in my campaign, but based on the original Fiend Folio version. Never much cared for the Planescape expansion of grell, with their interstellar philosophers and zap-guns, so I just kept them feral but uncannily cunning monsters. My players learnt to be rightly leary about them, like carrion crawlers they're almost certain to paralyse their victim what with their multiple paralysis attack, and unlike crawlers they'd then flense their victims to death in a few rounds.

I far prefer their original look to the reimagined one - a floating brains with eyes, beak and tentacles seems far cooler than the blobs they look like now.

Kakita Kojiro

08-19-2008 10:59 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9254132)

In behaviour and society, Grell are a bit like daleks. They roam around sayings things like "Human slime!" and "We will destroy you, man flesh!" - or at least they do in my imagination. Divided into workers, 'philosophers' (though one wonders how much philosophising they do other than "Grell are the best, and eat what they like!") and 'patriarchs', they act like a kind of ant or bee colony, with the patriarch acting as the Queen. Odd that it isn't a matriarch, really.

For some reason, I'm thinking Grell patriarchs = aberrant pseudo-Mormon polygamist cult leaders. Which would probably make the workers their chattel wives... although it'd be more creepy if you could squeeze the adventurers into that role...

add sort of a "the Grell patriarch paralyzes your companion and caresses her brain lovingly" moment, maybe.

David J Prokopetz

08-19-2008 11:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9257055)

I've used grell in my campaign, but based on the original Fiend Folio version. Never much cared for the Planescape expansion of grell, with their interstellar philosophers and zap-guns, so I just kept them feral but uncannily cunning monsters.

Spelljammer, rather - I don't think they played a significant role in *Planescape*.

noisms

08-19-2008 11:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gremlin

No, not Mogwai. Just one of those "chaotic and mischievous" D&D monsters that we all, er, love so much. Irritating bastards with which to annoy your players, basically, summed up in the line in the second paragraph which runs, "The angrier their victims are, the happier the Gremlins" - although that's by no means a bad thing. If you're the DM.

There's some ecology fluff ("Gremlins originate in an unknown plane plane of existence." Grr...) but what do we care?

Gremlins like to torment people with humiliating traps, the nastier the better, and that's their *raison d'être*.

They like to breed with other humanoid races, and there are several subspecies:

Fremlin - A fat and lazy but harmless type, which can make "tolerable" companions, with (presumably) 'hilarious' results.

Galltrit - Tiny mosquito like creatures which suck blood and drain Constitution points - which can only be recovered at the rate of one point per two weeks!

Mite - "Mites are tiny, mischievous, wingless gremlins that waylay dungeon adventurers for fun and profit." That's pretty much all you need to know, although mites get the most attention of all the subvarieties. Their favourite trick is to stun somebody, drag them to their lair, torment them for one to four days, steal all their possessions, then deposit them somewhere embarrassing once they get bored. Sound like all the ingredients of a good night out.

Mites live in groups in small tunnel networks, with each group having a King. Cue party of adventurers having to enter said network to recover something or other.

Snyad - These are expert thieves, snatching things right out of adventurers' hands. Dropped in is the fact that they "mate for life", which doesn't sound particularly Gremlin-like to me.

David J Prokopetz

08-19-2008 11:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9258352)

Fremlin - A fat and lazy but harmless type, which can make "tolerable" companions, with (presumably) 'hilarious' results.

Presented as a playable race in the *Complete Book of Humanoids*, disturbingly enough.

Crinos

08-19-2008 11:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9258363)

Presented as a playable race in the Complete Book of Humanoids, disturbingly enough.

Yes, making it the only 2e PC race that can only be hit by +1 or better (to my knowledge).

Sleeper

08-19-2008 02:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9258352)

Dropped in is the fact that they "mate for life", which doesn't sound particularly Gremlin-like to me.

All the sub-races except the fremlin originated in the Fiend Folio (and presumably White Dwarf before that). The whole gremlin thing was tacked on later. The first gremlins that I remember seeing were in Dragon #79, and the plane they came from was Earth — specifically, Earth during WW2. Think aviator goggles and bomber jackets.

Boris

08-19-2008 02:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The Grell kind of remind me of the Affronters from *Excession* - tentacles, beaks, gas sacks et al.

JRM

08-19-2008 05:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9258270)

Spelljammer, rather - I don't think they played a significant role in Planescape.

Gah, what was I doing, I was thinking of all those Spelljammer ships and Planescape typed out. Oh well, such things happen.

Brutus

08-19-2008 05:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hello Gremlins, my old friends.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9258352)

Gremlin

No, not Mogwai. Just one of those "chaotic and mischievous" D&D monsters that we all, er, love so much. Irritating bastards with which to annoy your players, basically, summed up in the line in the second paragraph which runs, "The angrier their victims are, the happier the Gremlins" - although that's by no means a bad thing. If you're the DM

Gremlins always seemed like an attempt to put the fae back into goblins. Maybe literally ;). They can produce hybrids with all the goblins. Awww yeah baby. So now we get various flying and non flying goblinoid tricksters with varying degrees of malice and mischief on their fickle little minds. They're not really "evil" or serious enough to be part of any big-bad equation on their own. These are the goblins I always wanted. They have some few things in common with their gremlin namesake, and it's not too hard to imagine them sabotaging a carriage or plaguing a fleet of spelljammer ships. Now where do we shoehorn them into a game otherwise?

Adventure hooks that don't have you playing ghostbusters to an infestation of gremlins in a quiet hamlet or spelljammer ship are hard to come by. Gremlins have a marked tendency to play comic relief. Especially the fremlin, who takes the vaunted goblinoid Jar Jar role in a group. He's an exciting way for a DM to torture players for entertainment. And really... Isn't that what the game is all about?

They don't stand and fight. They're not worth much xp. They're a chance for some fun. They annoy and vanish. Have I mentioned how much I want to play one as a PC?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9258352)

There's some ecology fluff ("Gremlins originate in an unknown plane plane of existence." Grr...) but what do we care Gremlins like to torment people with humiliating traps, the nastier the better, and that's their raison d'etre.

Now this is the odd part. I don't know what setting this entry originated in, but I feel like there's something else happening here. This plane of existence thing has to have meant something in its original context. In any game I chair this plane of existence is the yonder, fae wild, call it what you'd like. Gremlins are near the lowest tier of fae existence, (not far above squeakers and stwigers) but they're a sign that you're not entirely in Kansas anymore. They would herald the coming of other fae and intrigue. Or they would be attached to it like rats riding the boat to the new world.

Gremlins are the vermin of their "plane of existence", surely. They find their way into the world through cracks or portals into reality and go joyriding. Few where they come from would miss them, care, or be interested in their doings here. But an infestation of gremlins in quantity means that something may notice the exodus of the annoying little things. The way into the world they traverse is big enough for their larger cousins, bred from more powerful fae and more powerful goblin stock may come calling. Goblins, ogres, spriggans or any of the creatures cribbed from faerie tales could fall under this heading. A party of PCs could find themselves driving off a surprising number of these annoyances as they stop in an isolated village to recuperate. They are haunted (gremlin), annoyed (fremlin), ankle bitten (galltrit), Harassed and humiliated and their iron rations devastated (mite), and their pockets picked (snyad). Jermlaine surely begin to infest the walls of houses in the later stages. All the residents will be shaved and trussed up naked in the streets by morning.

Then larger things begin to leave footprints in town leading from the woods. Find the source, storm the breech, save the town before everyone is shaved hairless, their children stolen by fae elves, and everyone is gobbled up by ogres.

Quote:

Mite - "Mites are tiny, mischievous, wingless gremlins that waylay dungeon adventurers for fun and profit."

Mites are just low-rent Jermlaine. Snyads are the other half of that equation. Who knows why we got them all? We just needed more varieties of the little bastards to showcase the line that says they get very friendly with all the goblin species. Jermlaine are cooler and have a much longer entry - as well as a much deserved DiTerlizzi

illustration.

JRM

08-19-2008 05:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9258917)

All the sub-races except the fremelin originated in the Fiend Folio (and presumably White Dwarf before that). The whole gremlin thing was tacked on later. The first gremlins that I remember seeing were in Dragon #79, and the plane they came from was Earth — specifically, Earth during WW2. Think aviator goggles and bomber jackets.

...and Bugs Bunny, at least if you're anything like me. WW2 gremlins usually remind me of ***Falling Hare***, which is now [viewable as a public domain video](#).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brutus (Post 9259578)

Now this is the odd part. I don't know what setting this entry originated in, but I feel like there's something else happening here. This plane of existence thing has to have meant something in its original context. In any game I cha this plane of existence is the yonder, fae wild, call it what you'd like. Gremlins are near the lowest tier of fae existence, (not far above squeakers and stwigers) but they're a sign that you're not entirely in Kansas anymore. They would herald the coming of other fae and intrigue. Or they would be attached to it like rats riding the boat to the new world.

I have a vague memory of an old Dragon magazine article which strongly suggested gremlins came from Earth, or an alternative version of it ... Hmm, yup, it was probably Dragon #79. An April issue, needless to say.

DMH

08-19-2008 07:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9258352)

Snyad - These are expert thieves, snatching things right out of adventurers' hands. Dropped in is the fact that they "mate for life", which doesn't sound particularly Gremlin-like to me.

You missed their AC (-4) and speed (almost twice that of humans). In tunnel situations, it is easy to have one take something from a PC's belt and then run into a hole that leads to their lair.

noisms

08-19-2008 08:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9259789)

You missed their AC (-4) and speed (almost twice that of humans). In tunnel situations, it is easy to have one take something from a PC's belt and then run into a hole that leads to their lair.

See, this is why it's good to have such a knowledgeable and sharp-eyed readership. ;)

Canis Major

08-19-2008 09:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think Gremlins first appeared in a Basic D&D iteration, perhaps Castle Amber.

I think mites were originally a sub-race of jermaline, taken from the Descent/Drow original series.

Nathan P. Mahney

08-20-2008 01:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Oh, and just back on the Grell for a second - they were created by Ian Livingstone, co-founder of Games Workshop and the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks. Which automatically makes them super-awesome.

noisms

08-20-2008 01:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9263740)

Oh, and just back on the Grell for a second - they were created by Ian Livingstone, co-founder of Games Workshop and the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks. Which automatically makes them super-awesome.

Serious? Was that in one of the FF books? I'm wracking my brains to see if I can remember - I must have read the whole series.

noisms

08-21-2008 01:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Gremlin, Jermlaine

An amazingly long entry for these creatures, who are incredibly minor in the grand scheme of things. Two pages seems rather a lot for what is essentially a tiny, malevolent variety of gnome. Able to communicate with rats, and infesting underground tunnel systems, they wait in the shadows to ambush the unwary.

Their main job is to dart out and cut bag straps, steal things, trip people, and in some cases disenchant magic items. Preferably they disable opponents, beat them senseless, and then either eat them (5% chance) or leave them shaved, naked, and trussed up ready to be eaten by, say, a Carrion Crawler.

There's an interesting little bit of pseudo psychology in the entry to explain the Jermlaines' destructive impulses: they are apparently suffering from a massive Napoleon complex (if you excuse the pun) which causes them to want to take sadistic revenge on 'normal sized' humanoids. I'm not sure I like that - I think the idea of cruelty for cruelty's sake is more in keeping with the idea of the monster.

There are quite a few adventure hooks scattered liberally throughout the entry (it seems like a while since there has been a good adventure hook), mostly to do with dead bodies:

1 - Jermlaine are essentially dungeon-cleaners who scavenge dead bodies. This means that if adventurers are looking for somebody lost down a dungeon, Jermlaine are the men to know, so to speak.

2 - They can be allied with and, presumably, used as spies, although they have a unreasonably high chance of breaking such alliances (75%). They like sweets, through which they can possibly be induced into cooperation.

3 - They usually know everything about everyone who passes through their territory. The knowledge can probably be had, for a price, although it is likely to be unreliable...

Final point of interest: the entry feels it necessary to point out that crossbreeding with Jermlaine is impossible - as if it needed to be pointed out that trying to mate with a 1' tall humanoid isn't likely to work!

demiurge1138

08-21-2008 01:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I remember that crossbreeding thing! Weird. I guess, if you were trying to come up with the components of a mongrelfolk, that that information might come in handy...

One of my players (same guy who played the vegan ghoul) loves jermlaine to death. In a high-level Planescape game, which was specifically anything-goes, character-wise, he played the Crazy Rat Man, a druid who lived in the catacombs and sewers beneath Sigil. His Charisma was 2! He could only communicate by repeating what he had heard recently verbatim. Which, of course, made it hilarious when the game turned out to be high-stakes interplanar diplomacy. He was still quite useful, though: sneaking to the other diplomat's rooms to spy on them, for example.

JRM

08-21-2008 09:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9263875)

Serious? Was that in one of the FF books? I'm wracking my brains to see if I can remember - I must have read the whole series.

It wasn't in a Fighting Fantasy book, Ian Livingstone invented the grell as a D&D monster for White Dwarf magazine's Fiend Factory column, many of the better entries of which went into the Fiend Folio. Mr Livingstone was an editor and co-founder of said publication.

The fellow must have been awfully fond of the acronym 'FF', there's three of them in that first sentence.

DMH

08-21-2008 09:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

For some reason they remind me more of Crites than Gremlins even though they don't eat people??

Crinos

08-21-2008 09:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9267670)

For some reason they remind me more of Crites than Gremlins even though they don't eat people??

The Jermlaine remind me of those tiny evil mini ashes from Army of Darkness.

Nathan P. Mahney

08-21-2008 11:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ian also gave us the Hook Horror, so far as semi-iconic D&D monsters go. Strangely enough, his partner in crime Steve Jackson doesn't have a single monster in the Fiend Folio.

Crinos

08-21-2008 11:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9268090)

Ian also gave us the Hook Horror, so far as semi-iconic D&D monsters go. Strangely enough, his partner in crime Steve Jackson doesn't have a single monster in the Fiend Folio.

Steve was saving all of his good ideas for GURPS.

Nathan P. Mahney

08-21-2008 12:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Though I'm not sure if you're joking or not... different Steve Jackson. The GURPs guy is American, the Games Workshop and Fighting Fantasy co-founder is English. Though funnily enough, GURPS Steve Jackson wrote some Fighting Fantasy gamebooks as well.

Crinos

08-21-2008 12:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9268244)

Though I'm not sure if you're joking or not... different Steve Jackson. The GURPs guy is American, the Games Workshop and Fighting Fantasy co-founder is English. Though funnily enough, GURPS Steve Jackson wrote some Fighting Fantasy gamebooks as well.

Wow, so they're are two guys named Steve Jackson that work in the rpg industry. Did not know that.

noisms

08-21-2008 03:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9268305)

Wow, so they're are two guys named Steve Jackson that work in the rpg industry. Did not know that.

The British Steve Jackson is my hero. I used to love the Final Fantasy books - especially the Sorcery! mini series he came up with solo.

kelvingreen

08-21-2008 09:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9263875)

Serious? Was that in one of the FF books? I'm wracking my brains to see if I can remember - I must have read the whole series.

A lot of the original *Fiend Folio* monsters first appeared in *White Dwarf*, and a good number of them were created by Ian Livingstone, who was editor and contributor of *WD* at the time. As far as I'm aware, there's been no crossover from *Fighting Fantasy*, which comes as a surprise, as there were some neat monsters in there; a Gonchong would be a great surprise for a *D&D* party.

glass

08-21-2008 09:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9268305)

Wow, so they're are two guys named Steve Jackson that work in the rpg industry. Did not know that.

Confused me for a while, too.

glass.

noisms

08-22-2008 11:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Griffon

Man, talk about beating you over the head with the idea that Griffons like to eat horses. I counted more than 10 mentions of horses, and how Griffons like to eat them a whole lot, in the first dozen or so lines. Anyway, Griffons like horses, and will fight to the death when horseflesh is at stake. They spend their lives soaring around on the look out for horses, and are 90% likely to attack anybody riding a horse who they see - but the rider can usually get away by releasing his or her horses for the Griffons to eat, and the horse horse horse the horseflesh horse horse. Horse.

Horseplay aside, I do like Griffons, hippogriffs, pegasi, unicorns and other "not quite dragons but still based on real-world mythology" monsters. They're easy to envisage for the players and the DM, and there's something iconic and archetypal about them: when a monster often appears on coats-of-arms and embossed on knights' shields, you know that it taps into some undercurrent of psychic energy buried deep within the human soul, or something.

I always found it unusual that Griffons should lay eggs, though. Okay, they have beaks and wings, but the organs relevant to reproduction are a lion's, surely. Then again, it wouldn't do to press the point too much, as Griffon eggs (at 2,000 gp a pop) are clearly one of the stalwarts of my patented Egg Thief Campaign idea.

An obvious plot hook is the theft of Griffon fledglings to be raised as mounts for a vain nobleman or other. Or, alternatively, for the goody-two-shoes party: returning a captured fledgling to its parents. Aww.

Sleeper

08-22-2008 12:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Now I want to play an awakened griffin trying to kick "horse". Shakes, interventions, 12 step programs, waiting in line

for the daily dole of horse substitute, self-loathing after going on a binge in the royal stables....

Belchion

08-22-2008 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Griffons 11 - a band of griffons up to sneak into a very well protected horse stable to get some handful of finest horse meat. The heroes are there to catch the griffons before they succeed (or to catch them after their success).

kelvingreen

08-22-2008 05:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9272862)

Now I want to play an awakened griffin trying to kick "horse". Shakes, interventions, 12 step programs, waiting in line for the daily dole of horse substitute...

That *Stone to (Horse) Flesh* spell is looking more viable now, isn't it?

glass

08-22-2008 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9272862)

Now I want to play an awakened griffin trying to kick "horse". Shakes, interventions, 12 step programs, waiting in line for the daily dole of horse substitute, self-loathing after going on a binge in the royal stables....

One of the old cartoons in Dragon had a talking griffin who was most put out at the suggestion he would eat horses, to the point of laying it on a bit thick. Maybe he was your guy a few years down the line?

glass.

Sleeper

08-22-2008 07:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9273661)

That Stone to (Horse) Flesh spell is looking more viable now, isn't it?

The law of sympathy... shape = taste? Take the form, take on the flavor. Craft a piece of stone into a beautiful horse then turn it into a horse-shaped piece of flesh (boneless even), and the griffins gorge themselves in a frenzy. The best maedar sculptors might be in demand as haute cuisine chefs, creating exotic flavor combinations via creative chipping.

JRM

08-22-2008 08:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9272862)

Now I want to play an awakened griffin trying to kick "horse". Shakes, interventions, 12 step programs, waiting in line for the daily dole of horse substitute, self-loathing after going on a binge in the royal stables...

Well the bit about Griffins attacking horses is from **Medieval** and **Classical Greek** Bestiaries, which also say they're maneaters and have a habit of digging up gold and gems (to decorate their nests?). One source says men can make drinking horns from their claws, plus bows from their ribs and pens (flight feathers) - although I'd have thought the latter would be more suited for arrows.

It's curious that the AD&D version makes no mention of the treasure-collecting habit, it's an obvious adventure hook - maybe the players try to distract the Griffins with a couple of old nags while they steal its gold and/or gems. If they're evil it'd be easier if they just smeared poison over the horse, then they'd get griffin-parts to sell as well.

Some medieval bestiaries say griffins were huge, "eight times larger than a lion", although there are some sources that suggest they're of more modest dimensions, about horse or lion sized. Look at these pictures, that's a horse the first griffin is clutching, and a man in the second one (who, if he's a six-footer would make the griffin the size of a shire horse).

<http://bestiary.ca/beastimage/img4458.jpg>

http://www.eso-garden.com/images/upl...uscripts_2.jpg

The ancient Greeks usually describe griffins as being smaller, horse to wolf-sized. Here are some classical Greek vase paintings that show lion- or pony-sized griffins:

<http://www.theoi.com/image/M16.3Grypes.jpg>

<http://www.theoi.com/image/M16.2Gryps.jpg>

Apropos of nothing I've long preferred the alternative spelling Gryphon, partly because the ancient Greeks usually spelled the beast's name with a Y, but mainly just because it *looks* nicer.

sim_james

08-22-2008 09:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9272698)

Man, talk about beating you over the head with the idea that Griffons like to eat horses. I counted more than 10 mentions of horses, and how Griffons like to eat them a whole lot, in the first dozen or so lines. Anyway, Griffons like horses, and will fight to the death when horseflesh is at stake. They spend their lives soaring around on the look out for horses, and are 90% likely to attack anybody riding a horse who they see - but the rider can usually get away by releasing his or her horses for the Griffons to eat, and the horse horse horse the horseflesh horse horse. Horse.

To be fair, horses were pretty important back in The Olden Days. Residents of Your Campaign World may very well consider the griffon's horse-eating ways to be of direst importance and dreadful to consider. Who cares if the mind flayers are building a brain empire deep beneath the earth? At least they're not after your *horses!*

Back before 3.5 turned paladin's steeds into pokemon, a few griffons was a great way to make Sir Poncy feel a bit nervous.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9272698)

I always found it unusual that Griffons should lay eggs, though. Okay, they have beaks and wings, but the organs relevant to reproduction are a lion's, surely.

Clearly, griffons are monotremes. Like the platypus.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9272698)

An obvious plot hook is the theft of Griffon fledglings to be raised as mounts for a vain nobleman or other.

The way I'd run that is to make the Profit! seem appealing, only to reveal that, like a house full of otters, what initially seems manageable and kinda cute is in fact a chaotic catastrophe waiting to happen. ;)

kami2awa

08-22-2008 10:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9274051)

Clearly, griffons are monotremes. Like the platypus.

Haha! Brilliant... the platypus is probably the closest thing to a griffon IRL. It looks like it's half beaver, half duck; maybe evolution will one day give us a large, predatory platypus with an eagle-like beak.

demiurge1138

08-23-2008 02:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've heard a theory posited that griffons were inspired by Scythian stories about the bones of Protoceratops, a smallish dinosaur.

<http://scienceblogs.com/afarensis/up...ratops%202.jpg>

Huge beak, the body's sort of leoine if you squint, big scapulae for wing-attachment... I can buy it.

Crinos

08-23-2008 02:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9275087)

I've heard a theory posited that griffons were inspired by Scythian stories about the bones of Protoceratops, a smallish dinosaur.

<http://scienceblogs.com/afarensis/up...ratops%202.jpg>

Huge beak, the body's sort of leoine if you squint, big scapulae for wing-attachment... I can buy it.

I have a book of drawings of creatures from fantasy novels and myths, and they have a drawing of a Griffin that's based on those skeletons. Looks more like a dinosaur with feathers than a lion/bird hybrid.

Sleeper

08-23-2008 07:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9275097)

I have a book of drawings of creatures from fantasy novels and myths, and they have a drawing of a Griffin that's based on those skeletons. Looks more like a dinosaur with feathers than a lion/bird hybrid.

Well, all known dinosaurs with feathers are saurischian coelurosaurs, and *Protoceratops* is an ornithischian.

Still a neat theory. Especially plausible if it was based on a skull and couple scattered bones, and not an articulated specimen. After all fossils are usually jumbled and require considerably expertise to reassemble, and the biggest bones have the best chance of surviving (like the humerus, or the the skulls of ceratopsians). Far more plausible than pinning the unicorn myths on supposed sightings of *Elasmotherium* (a huge rhino with a giant horn that went extinct hundreds of thousands of years ago), for instance.

Crinos

08-23-2008 07:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9276135)

Well, all known dinosaurs with feathers are saurischian coelurosaurs, and Protoceratops is an ornithischian.

Still a neat theory. Especially plausible if it was based on a skull and couple scattered bones, and not an articulated specimen. After all fossils are usually jumbled and require considerably expertise to reassemble, and the biggest bones have the best chance of surviving (like the humerus, or the the skulls of ceratopsians). Far more plausible than pinning the unicorn myths on supposed sightings of Elasmotherium (a huge rhino with a giant horn that went extinct hundreds of thousands of years ago), for instance.

And people thought Mammoth skulls belonged to Cyclops, because they assumed the big hole in the center was an eye socket.

Khuxan

08-23-2008 06:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wow... Over the last two or three days I've read through both of these huge threads - all 161 pages of them. It's been a pretty incredible journey.

These threads have inspired me to try a Dogs in the Vineyard-style game, with isolated villages and towns each succumbed to some sort of monstrous problem. Often, in a preachy, moralistic way, the outsiders will purify the village only to realise the corruption came from within the hearts of man, not the wilds beyond the town walls. I'm not sure if I'll use Reign or Labyrinth Lord or 4E, but in any case I'll definitely be using gnolls, ghouls, dragons and golems.

Thanks!

JRM

08-23-2008 09:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9276135)

Well, all known dinosaurs with feathers are saurischian coelurosaurs, and Protoceratops is an ornithischian.

True enough, but not really relevant since the people who came up with the idea of griffins lived thousands of years before Owens even coined the term dinosaur, or people had associated them with feathers for that matter.

The *Protoceratops*-Griffin theory is an interesting idea though. There are enough connections (e.g. ancient Greek stories about Gryphons and Scythians, the central Asian location, the gold, Scythian artworks of griffins, *Protoceratops* fossils & eggs) to make it possible, but it's just speculation. They could have just

developed the idea of a lion-eagle chimera from scratch, there are plenty of winged monsters in mythology which don't appear to derive from a single animal, living or extinct - winged bulls, winged horses, winged lions, winged humanoids (some with animal heads), winged bulls with lion's paws and man's faces et cetera et cetera.

Oskar Breytenbach

08-24-2008 08:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9277744)
but its just speculation. They could have just developed the idea of a lion-eagle chimera from scratch

Exactly - people have always had imaginations. I'd always pick that as the most likely explanation.

see

08-25-2008 01:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9268244)
Though I'm not sure if you're joking or not... different Steve Jackson. The GURPs guy is American, the Games Workshop and Fighting Fantasy co-founder is English. Though funnily enough, GURPS Steve Jackson wrote some Fighting Fantasy gamebooks as well.

Those Fighting Fantasy books make the U.S. Steve Jackson one of the few people in the world to have ghost-written something under his own name.

The Last Conformist

08-25-2008 09:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The coat of arms of Östergötland, the Swedish province in which I live, depicts a griffon with the wings of a dragon rather than those of an eagle:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...at_of_arms.png

Clearly we need rules for the hybrid offspring of griffons and dragons!

Crowetron

08-25-2008 09:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Y'know, I once commented to a friend that "there should be Grifgons in DnD". He misheard me, and came up with

something far more awesome than a half griffon/half dragon.

ascendance

08-25-2008 09:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9180074)

God, I'd forgotten about these. It's funny how the Dragonlance universe had not one but TWO of the most irritating D&D races ever. The less said about these the better (you'll understand if you've read any Dragonlance novels)

You forgot the third race of annoyingness... the Gully Dwarf.

Crinos

08-25-2008 10:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crowetron (Post 9282061)

Y'know, I once commented to a friend that "there should be Griffons in DnD". He misheard me, and came up with something far more awesome than a half griffon/half dragon.

Which is probably why they made the half dragon template in dnd.

noisms

08-25-2008 02:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by ascendance (Post 9282076)

You forgot the third race of annoyingness... the Gully Dwarf.

I have a mental block there - like how people often can't recall childhood traumas.

Gully Dwarfs? What Gully Dwarfs?

Anyway, update soon. Things are hellishly busy.

Crinos

08-25-2008 02:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Don't look now Noism's but I've [Bit your style](#).

Gonna try and hit one monster a day. Hopefully it will pick up as much interest as this bad boy did.

noisms

08-26-2008 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Grimlock

Grimlocks: the Zatoichi of D&D. Blind warriors with such good sense of hearing and smell that they can fight and kill. Is it believable? Not really. Do I care? Not a jot. The blind warrior trope is cool. Grimlocks also have one of the better non-Diterlizzi pictures in the book; the featured Grimlock looks a bit like one of the members of Kiss on a particularly bad hair day, but everything is in proportion and quite 1980's-comic-book in style.

Grimlocks are like big, muscular ape-men with metal hair and blank eyes, who like to chop you up with big axes. The best way to fight Grimlocks is to use spells which make noise, or else to throw strong-smelling perfumes at them; this is like blinding the creatures, given that they have such well developed hearing and scent. Nice idea, but one of those things that's difficult to DM: How do you separate player knowledge from character knowledge in cases like that?

The other notable thing about Grimlocks is that they are cannibals (man-eaters, strictly speaking), and perform the function of, basically, bin-men for Illithids: the Mind Flayers eat the brains and the Grimlocks then chomp on the bodies. This often 'decimates' their communities through disease - perhaps the only mention in the MM of a monster race having any sort of ill-effects from the dissolute lifestyle it leads. As well as being chummy with Illithids, the things also sometimes knock around with Medusae - for obvious reasons. Quite a nice touch, that, although you have to wonder where Medusae and Grimlocks meet up to make such arrangements. During the monster mash, maybe.

It should be noted that Grimlocks are Neutral Evil, which doesn't really make sense to me - surely they're Chaotic Evil, based on the contents of the entry?

David J Prokopetz

08-26-2008 10:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9287667)

It should be noted that Grimlocks are Neutral Evil, which doesn't really make sense to me - surely they're Chaotic Evil based on the contents of the entry?

I tend to think of neutral evil as the "we can sort of cooperate in groups and will only kill each other if there's advantage to be had" alignment, as opposed to chaotic evil's "we'll flip out and kill each other just because".

kelvingreen

08-26-2008 10:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I seem to remember that the Grimlock picture in the 1e *MM* showed them with some kind of metal grill in their mouth. It didn't appear in later editions, so I assume it must have been some sort of weird error.

EDIT: Oops, it was the *Fiend Folio*, I think.

David J Prokopetz

08-26-2008 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9287881)

I seem to remember that the Grimlock picture in the 1e MM showed them with some kind of metal grill in their mouth. It didn't appear in later editions, so I assume it must have been some sort of weird error.

Perhaps that particular grimlock had braces. Underdark races have very advanced dentistry. They basically **have** to - I mean, have you seen the teeth on some of those beasties?

Zartes

08-27-2008 12:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9287901)

*Perhaps that particular grimlock had braces. Underdark races have very advanced dentistry. They basically **have** to - mean, have you seen the teeth on some of those beasties?*

OOoooo... now you've done it. You've given me an idea for a campaign.

The players are a group of specialists of various sorts (Dentist, cobbler, other stuff that doesn't spring to mind right now) who wander around the underdark supplying their services to anybody they encounter (well, anybody who doesn't immediately try to eat them. That's why everybody would have combat training), for a fee. Adventure ensues, of course, when they get caught up in various political and territorial disputes, through which they can wander with semi-impunity thanks to the fact nobody wants to piss off the only dentist for several hundred miles.

JRM

08-27-2008 12:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9287667)

Grimlock

It should be noted that Grimlocks are Neutral Evil, which doesn't really make sense to me - surely they're Chaotic Evil, based on the contents of the entry?

I've liked Grimlocks since the Fiend Folio, but never really used them. There was just something about the idea of eyeless cannibalistic humans lurking in the deep caverns, creeping out at night to prey upon the surface dwellers, that appealed to me.

That said, I don't like them being pure carnivores. There are already far too many such monsters in D&D for it to be credible. My campaign's version of grimlocks are omnivores, mainly eating roots and mushrooms but lusting for the luxury of flesh, especially human. Not all their victims are immediately eaten, the unfortunate ones are kept as slaves, facing a grisly life of darkness and pain - I assume torture is a popular Grimlock pastime, them being Evil and all.

I had a nice outline for a Grimlock scenario I never got around to playing, based around a group of low-level PCs discovering what happened to people who have been disappearing from some isolated settlements. I remember they'd come across a 'trusty' Grimlock slave who was so broken that the "Masters" let him farm mushrooms with little supervision, who the PCs could capture as a guide. The poor wretch was missing his eyes, and his legs below his knees - the latter as a result of a failed escape attempt shortly after he was captured. It was the last time he remembered seeing light, which the Grimlocks provided so he could see them eat his feet.

Canis Major

08-27-2008 12:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ah! Perhaps the Grimlock are responsible for the Gibberlings?

Results of their torture experiments?

Defected grimlocks born with sight? The grimlocks wont slay thier mutant offspring, but put them into pens until they need to release them, arming them with short swords. Unleashed upon the surface world, they devastate a region, and afterwards the grimlocks creep above to gather survivors and loot. They could also use them as a weapon against other underdark races, who may find them easily channeled into other direction.

Or, going back to just the gibberlings, perhaps they are a result of mind flayer feeding...every so often a victim survives the brain eating, and transfroms slowly into a gibberling. Again the mind flayers or their slaves gather these things up, arm them and use them as a living weapon.

Or they are failed results of the mind flayers' breeding, where the ceremorphosis doesn't take.

YojimboC

08-27-2008 12:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Grimlocks are kind of dumb. So their senses of smell and hearing allow them to "see" within 20 feet?

Dwarves have darkvision (or wasn't that infravision in 2E?) out to 60 feet. Talk about surprise round. A handful of dwarven crossbowers would wipe out a gang of grimlocks before the grimlocks were even remotely aware of their

presence.

Heck, orcs and goblins would wipe these guys out without too much trouble. I think grimlocks would have to retreat under the protection of illithids just to survive, which would give them an interesting niche: Mind Flayer garbagemen.

Malignant Marionette

08-27-2008 06:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think someone whose hearing is so keen they "see" everything within 20 feet would hear noises coming from a bit farther away than that. I mean, even I can hear noises from more than 20 feet away and I can barely manage to not bump into furniture too much in my own home if I close my eyes and walk really slowly.

JasonK

08-27-2008 07:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9289481)

I think someone whose hearing is so keen they "see" everything within 20 feet would hear noises coming from a bit farther away than that. I mean, even I can hear noises from more than 20 feet away and I can barely manage to not bump into furniture too much in my own home if I close my eyes and walk really slowly.

Your furniture emits noise to let you know where it is? Or is it more that you remember where that stuff is from looking at it and have a good mental map?

The point in your first sentence still stands, of course, but your logic for getting there is a little fuzzy, that's all. :)

~ jason

6inTruder

08-27-2008 07:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9289714)

Your furniture emits noise to let you know where it is?

Yours DON'T?!

JasonK

08-27-2008 08:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9289855)
Yours DON'T?!

Only my TV and my 'Fridge. :)

~ jason

Celisasu

08-27-2008 09:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9287667)

Grimlock

It should be noted that Grimlocks are Neutral Evil, which doesn't really make sense to me - surely they're Chaotic Evil based on the contents of the entry?

Remember, this is 2nd Edition. Nobody could agree on what the alignments meant. Look at the descriptions of various characters in different settings such as Lawful Good(in official suppliments) elves for Dragonlance that condone slavery. Or Chaotic Good Alustriel in Forgotten Realms who is an avid supporter bringing law and order to the Silver Marches and follows those laws more religiously than everyone else there. I think they just spun a wheel and whatever alignment it landed on became the official alignment half the time.

Matthew L. Martin

08-27-2008 09:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Celisasu (Post 9290069)

Remember, this is 2nd Edition. Nobody could agree on what the alignments meant. Look at the descriptions of various characters in different settings such as Lawful Good(in official suppliments) elves for Dragonlance that condone slavery.

Bad choice of evidence if you really want to limit this to 2nd Edition. In Dragonlance, "Lawful Good" has translated as "self-righteous, hypocritical Lawful Evil" since *First* Edition, and I think it persisted into 3rd to some extent as well.

noisms

08-27-2008 10:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Matthew L. Martin (Post 9290144)

Bad choice of evidence if you really want to limit this to 2nd Edition. In Dragonlance, "Lawful Good" has translated a "self-righteous, hypocritical Lawful Evil" since First Edition, and I think it persisted into 3rd to some extent as well.

The moral of the story being that you shouldn't pay much attention to Dragonlance if you can possibly help it.

Crinos

08-27-2008 10:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Celisasu (Post 9290069)

Remember, this is 2nd Edition. Nobody could agree on what the alignments meant. Look at the descriptions of various characters in different settings such as Lawful Good(in official suppliments) elves for Dragonlance that condone slavery. Or Chaotic Good Alustriel in Forgotten Realms who is an avid supporter bringing law and order to the Silver Marches and follows those laws more religiously than everyone else there. I think they just spun a wheel and whatever alignment it landed on became the official alignment half the time.

Yeah, in the spelljammer appendix there's a lawful good creature whose primary goal is to mentally enslave and dominate anyone he comes across.

kami2awa

08-27-2008 05:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9290022)

Only my TV and my 'Fridge. :)

~ jason

It's a fantasy world... maybe the Grimlocks hear the infrasonic singing of Earth elementals resonating through the Underdark and use that to know where things are.

noisms

08-27-2008 05:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9291537)

It's a fantasy world... maybe the Grimlocks hear the infrasonic singing of Earth elementals resonating through the Underdark and use that to know where things are.

Like whalesong. Then they could set up massage and aromatherapy parlours for stressed out gibberlings.

Celisasu

08-27-2008 06:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9290391)

Yeah, in the spelljammer appendix there's a lawful good creature whose primary goal is to mentally enslave and dominate anyone he comes across.

Oh? What creature does this? *Doesn't have any Spelljammer stuff*

JRM

08-27-2008 08:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9289481)

I think someone whose hearing is so keen they "see" everything within 20 feet would hear noises coming from a bit farther away than that. I mean, even I can hear noises from more than 20 feet away and I can barely manage to not bump into furniture too much in my own home if I close my eyes and walk really slowly.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9289714)

Your furniture emits noise to let you know where it is? Or is it more that you remember where that stuff is from looking at it and have a good mental map?

The point in your first sentence still stands, of course, but your logic for getting there is a little fuzzy, that's all. :)

Aren't you missing the point? Surely it's a question of precision vs range. A grimlock's ear&nose-vision can accurately target creatures up to 20' away, but it's reasonable to suppose it allows the creatures to be aware of the sound & smell of creatures at considerably greater distances. A dwarf with 60' infravision can target warm bodies up to 60' away, but what about greater distances?

Unfortunately AD&D is vague on this issue, a lot of sources seem to assume that a sense just cuts off at its range limit, so the grimlock wouldn't be able to "see" a herd of ogres playing steel drums if they were 21' feet away, and a dwarf's infravision would be blind to a nest of salamander more than twenty yards off. That is, of course, very silly.

JRM

08-27-2008 08:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9290391)

Yeah, in the spelljammer appendix there's a lawful good creature whose primary goal is to mentally enslave and dominate anyone he comes across.

Personally, I welcome our new Formian overlords. :)

(Originally Formians came from the outer plane of Arcadia, so they were LG/LN rather than pure LN as they are now. Add in the Taskmasters slavery ability and you've effectively got LG Borg.)

Crinos

08-27-2008 10:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

IIRC the LG enslaving creature was what was left of a guy who was left out in the phlogiston. Basically it was this half dead emaciated guy who couldn't move and would take over a spelljammer crew one at a time after they brought him aboard.

You know, typical lawful good stuff.

Malignant Marionette

08-27-2008 10:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9289714)

Your furniture emits noise to let you know where it is? Or is it more that you remember where that stuff is from looking at it and have a good mental map?

The latter, which is why I said 'in my apartment'. In anyone else's I'd probably be feeling my way forwards, whereas that grimlock would probably 'see' the furniture when the soundwaves from his footsteps bounce back from them, or something. Kind of like a bat-like sonar ability.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9289714)

The point in your first sentence still stands, of course, but your logic for getting there is a little fuzzy, that's all. :)

I'm not sure my logic has ever been too clear to anyone else, actually. :p

JRM

08-27-2008 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9292077)

IIRC the LG enslaving creature was what was left of a guy who was left out in the phlogiston. Basically it was this half dead emaciated guy who couldn't move and would take over a spelljammer crew one at a time after they brought him aboard.

You know, typical lawful good stuff.

Doesn't ring any bells I'm afraid, the closest Spelljammer monster to that description I could find was the **Ancient Mariner**, which are phlogiston undead who'll try to convert a ship and it's crew into their own ghostly condition, but they're incorporeal, mobile and Chaotic Evil (at least in 3rd edition).

Crinos

08-27-2008 11:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9292217)

*Doesn't ring any bells I'm afraid, the closest Spelljammer monster to that description I could find was the **Ancient Mariner**, which are phlogiston undead who'll try to convert a ship and it's crew into their own ghostly condition, but they're incorporeal, mobile and Chaotic Evil (at least in 3rd edition).*

Well, I'll make the spelljammer compendium my next DnD related purchase and get back to you.

DMH

08-28-2008 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9291866)

(Originally Formians came from the outer plane of Arcadia, so they were LG/LN rather than pure LN as they are now. Add in the Taskmasters slavery ability and you've effectively got LG Borg.)

Actually originally they were Prime Plane dwellers that acted like ants (see 1e MM II). They had different color schemes to tell the different colonies apart. I didn't care much for them, but they were better than the planar things they turned into.

noisms

08-28-2008 12:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9292493)

Actually originally they were Prime Plane dwellers that acted like ants (see 1e MM II). They had different color schemes to tell the different colonies apart. I didn't care much for them, but they were better than the planar things they turned into.

I rather liked their Planescape incarnation, found in Planes of Law, I think.

noisms

08-28-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Grippli

A real oddity, these: big tree frogs with opposable thumbs who live like Amazonian Indians deep in the jungle. A neutral versions of Bullywugs or Tasloi, maybe. As you might expect, they are experts at camouflage and ambush, and like dart traps, nets, blowguns, and other malarkey and tomfoolery and skylarking of that ilk.

They're interesting in a low-grade sort of way, if only because I've never known anyone to use of them in a game, making them a bit of a novelty. Unusually for a minor D&D race, they seem to have an entire pantheon of Gods, including "evil snake gods and spider goddesses" as well as their patron "small frog like deity". I don't know about you, but if I was a Grippli, I'd want to worship a really BIG frog like deity, I think. Anyway, somewhat unusual, as I said: apart from Goblins and Orcs, who have pantheons, it's usually just the case that there is a God of the Gnolls or God of the Lizardmen or what have you. I'm not sure why Grippli warrant a pantheon, but next time I run a Planescape campaign the characters are going to end up visiting their realm. Near Semuanya's Bog, maybe.

Grippli matriarchs have the blood of their God flowing in their bodies. I suspect that could feature in a Herculean Task style campaign: "You must bring me the blood of a God! Mwahahahaha!"

Wakboth

08-28-2008 01:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The grippli lifespan - *700 years?! -* and the fact that they give birth to, say, six young in that time, is another lovely little

whacked piece of D&D ecology. :)

Celisasu

08-28-2008 01:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The grippli beg for a campaign world where they're the dominant race. Have the PCs go through a portal to an alternative world where they meet their grippli selves. :p

DMH

08-28-2008 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Why aren't they poisonous- aren't they modeled after dart frogs?

I did use them once many years ago. They were tribesmen at war with something (tasloi?) and the PCs had to defend their village. The players didn't like it because there was no ground per se (it was a swamp) and the tree dwellers (maybe it was su-monsters?) had a lot of concealment (sp). The rewards were worth it- free healing and other magic whenever they were in the area (which was a lot).

6inTruder

08-28-2008 05:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9291537)

It's a fantasy world... maybe the Grimlocks hear the infrasonic singing of Earth elementals resonating through the Underdark and use that to know where things are.

What? So they listen to the Hum of the Earth.... Maybe they worship the Locust King and do all sorts of stuff in the Dreaming too???

Sleeper

08-28-2008 10:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Xaos (Post 9288216)

Ah! Perhaps the Grimlock are responsible for the Gibberlings?

For their gibberling pets? I can picture a grimlock matriarch with her shock white hair trying to escape a bun, stooped over cane, peering up sightlessly from a face collapsed into wrinkles around a perfectly-preserved set of teeth filed into points. Scampering and squealing at the end of a leash is her pet gibberling, as she takes him

on a walk through the Underdark. Her pet wears a collar festooned with tinkly dangly things, and his shiny coat is groomed to resemble a humanoid poodle's. Fluffy runs around yammering and squealing incessantly, humping the legs of larger humanoids who happen by, and making the occasional mess. For which she carries along a magical pooper scooper with a built-in sphere of annihilation.

The standard gibberling is just the wild and feral variety. A pack of wild dogs that run up and eat the occasional kobold baby, compared to the high-strung, pampered, house pet penkingese.

YojimboC

08-29-2008 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9289481)

I think someone whose hearing is so keen they "see" everything within 20 feet would hear noises coming from a bit farther away than that. I mean, even I can hear noises from more than 20 feet away and I can barely manage to not bump into furniture too much in my own home if I close my eyes and walk really slowly.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9291855)

Aren't you missing the point? Surely it's a question of precision vs range. A grimlock's ear&nose-vision can accurately target creatures up to 20' away, but it's reasonable to suppose it allows the creatures to be aware of the sound & smell of creatures at considerably greater distances. A dwarf with 60' infravision can target warm bodies up to 60' away, but what about greater distances?

Yes and yes. But in a game setting where every other Underdark race has evolved *better eyes*, a species of entirely blind humanoids, while more plausible evolutionarily speaking, remains at a distinct disadvantage. Particularly since their vaunted "sonar" ability doesn't really work all that well beyond a very limited range.

The point about precision vs. range is a good one: grimlocks can easily be fooled by a group of noisy dwarves marching down a corridor, or even mining, creating enough noise to distract the grimlocks as some stealthier dwarves with crossbows sneak up to them. This is a gambit that would not work against drow, duergar, derro, orcs, goblinoids, or any other cave dwelling species from the Monster Manual.

Shit, a cadre of dwarven thieves could wipe these guys out.

So. Grimlocks would only be able to exist in the worst, most despicable, most remote caverns in the Underdark. Then their ecology falls apart, because sneaking out to nab humans becomes really tricky when you have to navigate miles of caverns controlled by creatures much better adapted to living underground than you are. I suppose they could exist like some kind of underground Sawney Bean on the fringes of Underdark communities, small groups of them preying on lone or single individuals... but there's not much keeping large communities of svirfneblin or dwarves from taking these guys out like yesterday's garbage.

JRM

08-29-2008 10:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9292493)

Actually originally they were Prime Plane dwellers that acted like ants (see 1e MM II). They had different color schemes to tell the different colonies apart. I didn't care much for them, but they were better than the planar things they turned into.

True enough, guess I should have specified that the Spelljammer/Outsider version of Formians were originally LN/LG. Anyhows, if my memory serves me right the MM2 entry for formians didn't include a caste with the power to *Dominate* slaves. That came latter, didn't it?

DMH

08-29-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Correct. They were intelligent slaver ants that warred on each other and giant termites.

JRM

08-29-2008 11:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9297346)

Yes and yes. But in a game setting where every other Underdark race has evolved better eyes, a species of entirely blind humanoids, while more plausible evolutionarily speaking, remains at a distinct disadvantage. Particularly since their vaunted "sonar" ability doesn't really work all that well beyond a very limited range.

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Oh I wasn't arguing that Grimlocks aren't disadvantaged by their lack of infravision, just that Marionette may have a point about them getting some longer range benefit from their extraordinary sense of hearing and smell.

As written in the Monstrous Compendium, Grimlocks have a lot more disadvantages against other subterranean races - physically they're fairly tough for basic humanoids, comparable to a gnoll but they have no ranged weapons or magic use and should lack numbers because they're pure carnivores (since omnivorous races would be able to maintain far higher population densities). Even worse, their entry specifies they can only eat humanoid flesh so they have to live near a large population of human(oid)s which, for some reason, does not wipe them out.

Not to mention that they're competing with all those other underdark creatures that like to eat humanoids, many of which will be a lot nastier than them. For example, ghouls also specialize in eating humanoids and grimlocks would find it very difficult to compete against them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9297346)

So. Grimlocks would only be able to exist in the worst, most despicable, most remote caverns in the Underdark. Then their ecology falls apart, because sneaking out to nab humans becomes really tricky when you have to navigate miles of caverns controlled by creatures much better adapted to living underground than you are. I suppose they could exist like some kind of underground Sawney Bean on the fringes of Underdark communities, small groups of them preying on lone or single individuals... but there's not much keeping large communities of svirfneblin or dwarves from taking these guys out like yesterday's garbage.

Yup, I was thinking of grimlocks as being monstrous versions of Sawney Bean and his family, except they live in the upper level of the underdark and mainly prey upon surface dwellers who lack night vision. There is another underdark environment they'd be good in though, hot ones. 1st/2nd edition infravision is useless once the environment is hotter than the creatures they're looking for, so grimlocks would be deadly in areas warmed to or about skin-temperature by volcanic heat. Now I'm imagining the subterranean equivalent of a tropical rain forest, vast swelteringly hot chambers filled with a riot of fungal growth, from amidst which leap naked, eyeless axe-wielding cannibals.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And, approximately 650 posts later, we are out of the G section! How many damn threads is this thing going to take? I reckon four, at this rate. Anyway, onwards and upwards.

Hag

Hags are a bit of a favourite of mine, I have to admit. As we all know, evil children are scary, and it works that way for old women too. Also, when the queen in Snow White turns into a witch, it's spooky. (And how weird is it, by the way, that there isn't a 'witch' monster in D&D?)

Much as I like them, I've never quite managed to play Hags as I think they were meant to be played - i.e. mistresses of disguise, who the players can try to trick into revealing their true identity. Instead, they've tended to appear as damsels in distress who turn nasty as soon as the players get close. Seems like a waste, but I'm probably a bit too lazy to do anything more complicated. Also, Hags are one of those monsters it's difficult to keep secret. Players get suspicious of damsels in distress, I find. Wolfweres have the same problem - victims of the player/character knowledge grey area.

Anyway. Hags are often found in threes (Macbeth, anyone?) and generally work magic together to hatch evil plots against neighbouring settlements of humans or demihumans - mostly revolving around bringing the Hags more victims i.e. food. (They can eat a person within 10 rounds!) Seems like a good way to start off a campaign actually: the players being unwittingly drawn into the schemes of a covey of Hags...

Annis

These are the biggest Hags - 8' tall - and the strongest. Also the most "UG!": they don't have much in the way of special abilities than hitting you very hard.

Greenhag

Smaller hags who can do more disguise-y spells and speak their own language - "a dialect of Annis" - which goes right into the Elven Cat Top 10, I'm sure.

Sea Hag

Sea Hags, who also have their own language, are actually the nastiest Hags despite their rather average stats - they have a killer gaze which either results in death or a coma, and their visage is so revolting as to cause <i>weakness</i> from fright.

Hellzon

08-30-2008 03:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9302181)

Also, Hags are one of those monsters it's difficult to keep secret. Players get suspicious of damsels in distress, I find.

Well, a woman in the D&Dverse is about 90% likely to be a hag, succubus, lamia (4E), doppelganger or likely any of a dozen monsters I didn't remember right now. :p

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

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I like hags too, but I've never had them play the 'damsel in distress who then attack the party viciously'. Indeed, I very rarely use hag adversaries, they're usually old crones who the players need to bribe/trick/force into helping them defeat some other evil.

A good way of making a hag's 'reveal' surprising is having her masquerading as a member of a community of completely ordinary folk that the party interact with for a session or two - that makes it a lot more surprising when a PC discovers that sweet little old Granny Figgs the baker is actually an unholy monster, and she wants to use them for pie filling.

Hags also make good leaders / powers behind the throne for bands of evil humanoid monsters, some of whom may be their offspring.

demiurge1138

08-30-2008 07:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've used hags surprisingly often; they're mastermind types, but unlike a lot of those (illithids, raksasha), they're good in a straight-up brawl too. Of all the hag encounters I've run, my favorite would have to be the covey of hags throwing spells from their platform inside the ribcage of an immense skeletal giant.

DMH

08-30-2008 08:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Dragon had an article in the 240's, Like Fine Wine, about critters that live much longer than humans. One of the examples is a greehag that corrupts some elves and is in talks with some monsters to eliminate pixies (?) in her forest. They are one of the few 2e creatures that really deserve to earn class levels.

The only downside I have seen of them is a DM who portayed them as feminists gone wrong. He miss the point- they are former humans* who have been cast out of their society. Sort of like women over 40 (25?) in Hollywood.

*The Van Richten's version. Breeding them from giants seems eh when cursed people is much more interesting.

Crinos

08-30-2008 08:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9303569)

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**The Van Richten's version. Breeding them from giants seems eh when cursed people is much more interesting.*

Well in 2e, they had spectral hags that could change mortal women into hags during special rituals.

And in 3e in the scarred lands that had a whole menagerie of hags, all of which were created from humans.

Crinos

08-30-2008 08:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And on an unrelated note, I LOVE Hags. Ever since I got my first MM I was interested in Hags, not sure why. Maybe it was because Annis hags were so hardcore in combat, or their general uniqueness. I was glad when the scarred lands made like fifty million subdivisions.

When I begin proper work on my True20 Monster book, I'm gonna include some Oriental hags like Yamamba and Hannya, just for fun.

Ratoslov

08-30-2008 10:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 9302683)

Well, a woman in the D&Dverse is about 90% likely to be a hag, succubus, lamia (4E), doppelganger or likely any of c dozen monsters I didn't remember right now. :p

Ever since playing Shadowgate as a kid, I always kind of figured that it was just adventurer SOP to kill any captive you weren't expressly sent into the dungeon to find.

Crinos

08-30-2008 11:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9303941)

Ever since playing Shadowgate as a kid, I always kind of figured that it was just adventurer SOP to kill any captive you weren't expressly sent into the dungeon to find.

Yeah, seriously. There are so many monsters that can pose as innocent travelers (Hags, Doppelgangers, Huecuva, Uthraki, Baldandar, Bhut, Mujinja, most lycanthropes, and what have you) that its no real surprise that many PC's knee jerk reaction to a situation is to cast know alignment or detect evil on everyone they meet.

noisms

08-30-2008 02:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9304012)

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My friend told me this story about how, in one campaign, the DM had an innocent looking old woman appear walking along the road towards the party. The players immediately had their characters leap on her, throw her in a sack, and beat her to death. Turns out they were right - it was a werewolf.

I would have deliberately changed it so that she was actually a real old woman - but maybe their DM was too honest to do that.

The Last Conformist

08-30-2008 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9304012)

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Which creates an obvious niche for inexplicably Lawful Good races of shapeshifting anthropophages.

demiurge1138

08-30-2008 05:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The idea that hags make hags out of people has been around for a while. Started in the 1e Ecology articles in Dragon Magazine, methinks. The idea is that hags seduce human men and have human babies, which become hags in a ritual when they reach adulthood.

I played around with that in my Freelance Police game. The Freelance Police were on the road, and in order to gain transportation, they agreed to find a local's missing daughter. Turns out that little Annika was in fact the daughter of a night hag, who had captured her, dragged her off into the woods and was in the middle of transforming her into a hag herself. Annika was rescued only one night into the three-night process. The party cleric cast remove curse on her, which got rid of the bruise-purple skin, but everyone was still freaking out about Annika's newly expanded intelligence and dark cunning. She thought a little too haggishly for anyone's taste, and they were especially worried after they found she had stolen one of their weapons, so she could defend herself when her hag-mother came back.

I really want to play Annika as a PC at some point...

JRM

08-30-2008 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9304700)

Which creates an obvious niche for inexplicably Lawful Good races of shapeshifting anthropophages.

And a just as obvious scenario were the PCs have to deal with a party of 'heroes' that have been murdering innocent travellers who they believe are monsters. Could work even if some of the travellers were evil, so long as they were modestly or inactively wicked.

"You must hunt down the killer of the hobgoblin ambassador, or else the Goblin Wars are sure to start again."

As for Lawful Good man-eaters, I've got a society in my campaign that occasionally lets monstrous outsiders run around the streets that are geased to only prey upon 'sinners' of various kinds so it rids them of a few sociopaths and/or undead. Admittedly, it did go a bit wrong when that magistrate went a bit funny and instructed a Vrock to eliminate anybody who defiled the park and it started eating dogs and litterers, but no system's perfect.

noisms

09-01-2008 11:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Halfling

Ah, Halflings. Everybody's favourite homoerotic ringbearers, brought to life in the D&D universe.

My first ever character in D&D (red box basic) was a Halfling, so they have a special place in my heart, but I can't remember much about the character in question. He was armed with a handaxe, as I recall, and killed a Carrion Crawler. But he met his end at the breath of a Red Dragon.

You all know Halflings back to front, I'm sure, so there's little point expounding on the entry in great detail. Instead, post anything interesting, unusual, or noteworthy that's ever happened regarding Halflings in a game you've played in.

Nathan P. Mahney

09-01-2008 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

My longest-running character was a halfling - currently he's a 20th level thief, dual-wielding +5 short swords and wearing a girdle of giant strength, plus a whole load of other items that basically make him impervious to everything. A touch munchkiny, but was a light-weight compared to the rest of the party.

Crinos

09-01-2008 12:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9304700)

Which creates an obvious niche for inexplicably Lawful Good races of shapeshifting anthropophages.

There is a Lawful good race of monsters on Al Qadim called Mason Wasps. Basically they're giant intelligent wasps who capture evil creatures, paralyze them, take them back to their nests then lay their eggs in them like a normal wasp does to a spider. Proving once again that lawful good isn't necessarily lawful nice.

demiurge1138

09-01-2008 02:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9310073)

There is a Lawful good race of monsters on Al Qadim called Mason Wasps. Basically they're giant intelligent wasps who capture evil creatures, paralyze them, take them back to their nests then lay their eggs in them like a normal wasp does to a spider. Proving once again that lawful good isn't necessarily lawful nice.

Best. Ever.

Oh, wait a sec, we're supposed to be talking about halflings? I've never played one, although I don't get to be a

player too often, but I was in a game where a couple both played halflings. They broke up, but the game stuck together, and the side-quest of him getting the permission of her family to wed fell through. Which is a shame, because the DM was asking for input on it, and I wanted her family to be degenerate man-eaters, Dark Sun style.

Dark Sun had the best halflings, I think. Tolkien pastiche and watered-down kender don't really do it for me. In my games for a while (OK, so it was one player, but it was a trend with him), the plucky, lucky, anything goes type of characterization that usually gets played with halflings was applied to goblins instead. Which I rather liked.

Crinos

09-01-2008 02:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Dark Sun halflings were maneaters?

Sounds like something they brought over to 3e with the BOVD with that race of vicious cannibalistic halflings.

demiurge1138

09-01-2008 04:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9310374)
Dark Sun halflings were maneaters?

Sounds like something they brought over to 3e with the BOVD with that race of vicious cannibalistic halflings.

Yeah, the jerren were expies of Dark Sun's halflings, but more evil. Dark Sun halflings were pragmatic, primitive and vicious, but not necessarily evil (if memory serves me right...)

kelvingreen

09-01-2008 05:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9310029)
You all know Halflings back to front, I'm sure, so there's little point expounding on the entry in great detail. Instead, post anything interesting, unusual, or noteworthy that's ever happened regarding Halflings in a game you've played in.

I've never played a halfling, or seen one in play, but I've always found it fun that in *Creature of Havoc* the player gets, instead of provisions and potions, wandering hobbits to eat.

I should really stop trying to associate everything with *Fighting Fantasy*. ;)

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9297346)

Yes and yes. But in a game setting where every other Underdark race has evolved better eyes, a species of entirely blind humanoids, while more plausible evolutionarily speaking, remains at a distinct disadvantage. Particularly since their vaunted "sonar" ability doesn't really work all that well beyond a very limited range.

The point about precision vs. range is a good one: grimlocks can easily be fooled by a group of noisy dwarves marching down a corridor, or even mining, creating enough noise to distract the grimlocks as some stealthier dwarves with crossbows sneak up to them. This is a gambit that would not work against drow, duergar, derro, orcs, goblinoids, or any other cave dwelling species from the Monster Manual.

Shit, a cadre of dwarven thieves could wipe these guys out.

So. Grimlocks would only be able to exist in the worst, most despicable, most remote caverns in the Underdark. Then their ecology falls apart, because sneaking out to nab humans becomes really tricky when you have to navigate mile of caverns controlled by creatures much better adapted to living underground than you are. I suppose they could exist like some kind of underground Sawney Bean on the fringes of Underdark communities, small groups of them preying on lone or single individuals... but there's not much keeping large communities of svirfneblin or dwarves from taking these guys out like yesterday's garbage.

Perhaps Grimlocks could inhabit narrow, winding tunnels so that it is next to impossible for another race to get more than 20' away from one but maintain line of sight.

JRM

09-02-2008 04:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9310053)

My longest-running character was a halfling - currently he's a 20th level thief, dual-wielding +5 short swords and wearing a girdle of giant strength, plus a whole load of other items that basically make him impervious to everything. A touch munchkin, but was a light-weight compared to the rest of the party.

Back in my early days as a DM I had a player who went through several halfling thieves, all of them called Barumbras. The last incarnation (not that there was much difference between them to be honest) was noticeable for his talent for back-stabbing giants with a longsword, of course he had to make multiple Climb Walls rolls to get high enough to reach a giant's back...

It's interesting that although most AD&D halfling adventurers are thieves, you don't very often hear of evil halflings or halfling-run thieves guilds. Despite the cliché of halflings being so larcenous that you need to shake them upside-down after leaving the dungeon to recover all the loot that they've pinched.

JohnBiles

09-02-2008 06:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9312205)

It's interesting that although most AD&D halfling adventurers are thieves, you don't very often hear of evil halflings or halfling-run thieves guilds. Despite the cliché of halflings being so larcenous that you need to shake them upside-down after leaving the dungeon to recover all the loot that they've pinched.

Early Dragon issues had Fineous Fingers, a comic strip about a human Thief, which among other things, features a Halfling Mafia.

Kakita Kojiro

09-02-2008 09:38 AM

Dragon also had Yamara, a comic strip about a halfling thief of dubious morals. And, of course, nowadays we've got Belkar from *Order of the Stick* as a halfling archetype.

... Come to think, everyone I know who played a halfling in AD&D played 'em as Evil little psychopaths. That's probably more an indictment of those players, of course, than of halfling players in general. But still. As it turned out, those guys got very familiar with indictments, so it all sort of worked out for the best, probably.

Crinos

09-02-2008 10:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9312997)

Dragon also had Yamara, a comic strip about a halfling thief of dubious morals. And, of course, nowadays we've got Belkar from *Order of the Stick* as a halfling archetype.

Yeah, but Belkar isn't a thief, he's a ranger.

Plus I doubt he's really a halfling. He may be a Jerren who was adopted by unwitting halflings as a babe. I wouldn't be surprised.

EDIT: And, IMHO, the stereotype of the evil Halfling is pretty much the same as the Good Drow stereotype started by our dear friend Drizzt Do'urden; We have a type of race that is pretty much uniformly one alignment, so making one of an opposite alignment and temperament is neat and edgy, so everyone has to do it.

In fact, one may argue that Belkar is a parody of Drizzt, since he's a two weapon ranger (like Drizzt) who is a contrary alignment of the rest of his people. If you want to stretch it, one could even argue that Belkar's relationship with Mr. Scruffy (Shojo's cat) is a parody of Drizzt's pet Panther.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9292736)

They're interesting in a low-grade sort of way, if only because I've never known anyone to use of them in a game, making them a bit of a novelty. Unusually for a minor D&D race, they seem to have an entire pantheon of Gods, including "evil snake gods and spider goddesses" as well as their patron "small frog like deity".

I used to love Grippli; I created a pantheon of gods for them to worship. Hmmm... (finds old txt file) that would be Mother Sah, the Frog; Father Fish, "He Who Swims Slowly"; Old Mother Spider, "She Who Devours Her Young"; Deep One, "She Who Is"; Scorpion, "He Who Strikes Himself"; Young Warrior Lizard, "He Who Loves the Sun"; Old Master Snake, "He Who is Known Only to Himself"; The Swarm, "He/She Who is Multitude, The Many Together"; The Flower, "He Who Finds a Mate, Scented Call"; The Centipede, "Wearer of Many Legs, She Who Finds Food"; and Worm, "The One That Sleeps".

Nothing amazingly original there, but each of them had a full description with avatar and priesthood; I doubt that many people wrote so many words about Grippli religion and beliefs. :p

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9312997)

... Come to think, everyone I know who played a halfling in AD&D played 'em as Evil little psychopaths.

Guilty as charged. 1st edition, halfling fighter/thief; killed shortly after backstabbing the Viking king.

In front of his Viking army.

Our cleric survived.

JRM

09-02-2008 07:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JohnBiles (Post 9312545)

Early Dragon issues had Fineous Fingers, a comic strip about a human Thief, which among other things, features a Halfling Mafia.

Oh how could I have forgotten Fineous Fingers' halfling mafia, that was just the kind of 'edgy' early-edition halfling societies I was talking about not coming across very often, at least in official products.* The 2nd edition Monstrous Manual still sticks with the Tolkienish view of halflings, describing them as "hard-working race of peaceful citizens" who fight fiercely in the defence of good, and that was matched with the rather cliched nature of halfling nations, like the Five Shires of Mystara (although that's D&D not AD&D, of course)

Plus of course, Belker, Yamara and the Fineous Fingers Halfling Mafia are all comics, so I could argue that's it's an inversion of the typical AD&D campaign's 'reality' for humorous effect, not an example of something that the author thinks DMs should include in their campaigns. Although I have a vague memory of an old Dragon magazine article (by Roger Moore, I think) which suggested having a halfling grandmother as the evil mastermind behind a campaign's epic villainous plot.

Guess it's all down to what sort of games you've been involved in, but most of the campaigns I'd seen back in the old days went for the 'bucolic hobbit' type of halfling society, so the contrast with the larcenous throat-slitting halfling characters was a bit bizarre. The only professions halflings seemed to follow in human lands was cook or burglar. I imagine that all the halfling thieves hid their lock picks in trick saucepans and had "chef's block's" full of throwing knives, so no one would suspect them.

Anyhow, I thought of Belker but omitted him, since he's (a) A later edition than I was thinking of (3.5) and (b) an individual who is not representative of any society or culture in the OotS campaign - indeed he's practically the antithesis of any society or culture he comes across. As far as 3rd-edition halflings go, the halfling run thieves guild in Sharn is a good example of the sort of group I don't remember seeing very often in official oldschool products. But then, Eberron made a deliberate effort to break with stereotypes for some of their races, with their nomadic halflings. Not that that's anything new, as Dark Sun shows us - now a civilized version of those halflings would make a very interesting guild of thieves & assassins. (With 'interesting' defined as 'your players may hate you', of course.:cool:)

Steve H

09-02-2008 08:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9313106)

EDIT: And, IMHO, the stereotype of the evil Halfling is pretty much the same as the Good Drow stereotype started by our dear friend Drizzt Do'urden; We have a type of race that is pretty much uniformly one alignment, so making one of an opposite alignment and temperament is neat and edgy, so everyone has to do it.

That reminds me of the time when I banned PC wizards for a campaign. I felt that most AD&D game worlds tend to be at pains to stress how rare magic users are, but for PCs they're positively mundane (since there are usually PC wizards and very frequently enemy ones too). So I ran a Savage Coast campaign with no PC Wizards and (it turned out) no NPC ones either. If it had run long enough we'd have had NPC ones eventually, but in practise we only did a couple of adventures for one reason or another.

noisms

09-02-2008 11:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9312997)

Dragon also had Yamara, a comic strip about a halfling thief of dubious morals. And, of course, nowadays we've got Belkar from Order of the Stick as a halfling archetype.

... Come to think, everyone I know who played a halfling in AD&D played 'em as Evil little psychopaths. That's

probably more an indictment of those players, of course, than of halfling players in general. But still. As it turned out, those guys got very familiar with indictments, so it all sort of worked out for the best, probably.

I wonder if there are other anti-stereotypical stereotypes than the Good Drow and the Evil Halfling?

Friendly Dwarf? Stupid Elf? Straightforward Gnome?

Lukas Sjöström

09-02-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9314976)

I wonder if there are other anti-stereotypical stereotypes than the Good Drow and the Evil Halfling?

Friendly Dwarf? Stupid Elf? Straightforward Gnome?

Terry Pratchett's Casanunda would certainly fit in. World-famous seducer, swordsman, all-around cultured fellow and an outrageous liar... who also happens to be a dwarf. He even shaves his beard, preferring to wear an oversized powdered wig.

Kakita Kojiro

09-03-2008 02:22 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9314976)

I wonder if there are other anti-stereotypical stereotypes than the Good Drow and the Evil Halfling?

Friendly Dwarf? Stupid Elf? Straightforward Gnome?

I'm holding out for Ugly Elf. True-ish to the original source material, and added bonus of wails of outrage from the fannish types. But then, I'm just mean that way.

However, I'm not so sure that we have any halfling stereotypes to hold up against these halfling anti-stereotypes we're talking about. The only halfling of note before the 3.0 iconic whatshername* I can think of... is Tasselhoff.** Who was a kender, and hence an abomination in the eyes of the Lord.

In Eberron they at least got some play, but mostly what we have are *descriptions* of what halflings are like... somewhere, *over there*... that PCs never encounter.

It'd be like *all* the drow that PCs encounter being Drizzt-a-likes. With no Eclavdra to show the archetype, how do you convince the players that all drow *aren't* mopey emo**** twinkles?

I mean, if you tell me that "halflings are cheerful and happy-go-lucky" and "drow are cruel and evil" -- but all the halflings I meet are psychotic Chaotic Evil, and all the drow I meet are misunderstood Chaotic Good... well?

* and she didn't so much have a personality, as have bozooms in leather.
** whatever his name was.
*** wait, there was a FR halfling, Ruskettle or something or other, in one of the FR books. I think.
**** yes, used it just to annoy. I *said* I was mean that way.

Crinos

09-03-2008 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9315728)
I'm holding out for Ugly Elf. True-ish to the original source material, and added bonus of wails of outrage from the fannish types. But then, I'm just mean that way.

We already have an ugly elf: Mialea the wizard from the 3rd edition character archetypes.

JRM

09-03-2008 04:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9314976)
I wonder if there are other anti-stereotypical stereotypes than the Good Dwarf and the Evil Halfling?

Friendly Dwarf? Stupid Elf? Straightforward Gnome?

The nice, cultured half-orc. Seen a few of those in my time.

Cognitive Dissident

09-03-2008 04:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

We need a sub race of overweight elves that like to bake.

Crinos

09-03-2008 05:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Cognitive Dissident (Post 9316233)
We need a sub race of overweight elves that like to bake.

In the world I plan to eventually publish, elves have a very slow metabolism (due to their longevity, being one of the oldest lived humanoid species), and the only reason they are all so thin and willowy is because their diet consists mainly of fruits, nuts, and lean meats. Elves who regularly eat human foods (which are very fatty and rich compared to their normal fare) or dwarven foods (which are even worse) tend to balloon up fairly quickly.

Kakita Kojiro

09-03-2008 05:20 AM

tree nuts = very high in fats and calories.

But *good* fats, so they'll be chubby elves without cardiovascular issues.

Although that, and the presumed typical elvish diet, probably leave them a little gassy. All those green veggies, oy.

Elves = willowy, pretty, and farty.

John_C

09-03-2008 05:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The only decent part of a really awful book called "Dragon Precinct" that I read a few years back was one of the main characters: A half elf who was astonishingly ugly. She had the worst traits from either side of her heritage, resulting in someone who just looked freakish instead of hauntingly beautiful.

JRM

09-03-2008 06:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Cognitive Dissident (Post 9316233)
We need a sub race of overweight elves that like to bake.

That's just what we need, a PC race for Santa Claus.:eek:

Crinos

09-03-2008 06:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9316367)

tree nuts = very high in fats and calories.

But good fats, so they'll be chubby elves without cardiovascular issues.

Although that, and the presumed typical elvish diet, probably leave them a little gassy. All those green veggies, oy.

Elves = willowy, pretty, and farty.

Alright then, replace nuts with fruits.

Nuts can be a staple of the halfling diet, since they tend to be rather plump as well.

Brandi

09-03-2008 08:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Cognitive Dissident (Post 9316233)
We need a sub race of overweight elves that like to bake.

I think back when White Dwarf wasn't all WHFB/WH40K all the time I remember seeing an NPC writeup of a fat elf-- way too fond of the high-quality sweets and pastries his Halfling chef made for him.

Belchion

09-03-2008 06:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9314976)
Friendly Dwarf? Stupid Elf? Straightforward Gnome?

Gnome Barbarian. The little guy with the axe bigger than himself - I met one once!

kami2awa

09-03-2008 06:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9318772)
Gnome Barbarian. The little guy with the axe bigger than himself - I met one once!

How about an Evil Elf? Not a Drow, just an elf who chose evil. There was also a write-up on the WOTC site of a Half-Orc Wizard.

sim_james

09-03-2008 06:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9318780)
How about an Evil Elf? Not a Drow, just an elf who chose evil.

What, Dalamar?

DMH

09-03-2008 06:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And the elven woman who performed "surgery" on slaves in A2. She was a mad scientist that they didn't play up her work.

Crowetron

09-03-2008 08:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I once had my players run into a friendly, helpful kobold of Neutral Good alignment. Unfortunately, they killed him before he had a chance to speak.

Friggin' PCs... *grumble, grumble*

Evilhalfling

09-04-2008 04:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9312997)
... Come to think, everyone I know who played a halfling in AD&D played 'em as Evil little psychopaths. That's probably more an indictment of those players, of course, than of halfling players in general.

Did I game with you in st louis? (1998-2001) That was when it started
After adventuring with 2 psionic evil halflings, a PC decided that all halflings were evil, and most psionic.

It was a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it became a motif in my games. Evil halflings have appeared in 5/7 of my campaigns since, making the jump from 2e to 3e.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro

But still. As it turned out, those guys got very familiar with indictments, so it all sort of worked out for the best, probably.

Nope my friends remain unindicted. Nvrmd.

noisms

09-04-2008 10:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Harpy

Whenever I think of Harpies now I always remember that Simpsons episode where Homer and Marge go on a marriage retreat with the church, and they end up in marriage counselling with (I think) Revered Lovejoy and another couple. The other couple are really abusive, hate each other, drink constantly, etc. At one stage the man turns to the woman and says "She's the queen of the harpies! Queen of the harpies!" and starts trying to mount an invisible crown on her head. "Take your crown, o queen!"

I don't know why, but I've always remembered that scene.

Anyway, Harpies. Dirty hags with wings who like to torture and kill. Their main method of attack and defence is their beautiful song, which mesmerises opponents and can be sung even during melee. The only way to resist it is to make preparations such as stuffing ones ears full of wax, a la Ulysses' crew during the Sirens episode. A nice addition to a campaign, I think. You can never have enough pseudo-Greek myth in a D&D game, I tend to believe. Although it would be a mean DM who just threw in a random Harpy encounter without giving the players some sort of clue or warning so they could prepare.

Maybe somebody more informed can tell us more about this, but were Harpies traditionally able to sing, or have the D&D designers just conflated the Harpy and Siren myths into one creature? Also, where does that Harpy in The Tempest fit into all of this? She was 'good', wasn't she?

Harpies seem like a good and unusual addition to the Great Egg Thief Campaign. They lay one egg every year "at will" (they reproduce asexually, because there are no males), although a price isn't given. I reckon, what, 1,000 gps? For the rich duke who has everything?

Crinos

09-04-2008 10:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The original Harpies were meant as a form of divine punishment. Basically they were creatures of waste and gluttony: Whenever the person they were tormenting tried to eat, they would swoop down, eat the food up, defaecate on the rest, then fly away before their victim could retaliate, that way the victim would slowly starve to death, even if they had a lot of food on paper.

I guess that wasn't menacing enough for DnD, so they tacked on the singing power, and its just become tradition by this point (even though they have an actual siren monster later on).

Kakita Kojiro

09-04-2008 11:32 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Evilhalfling (Post 9320727)

Did I game with you in st louis? (1998-2001) That was when it started

I played AD&D in St. Louis... but in the 80s. I'm *old*, son. ;)

I also lay the blame on my ill-spent youth for poisoning my mental conceptspace of harpies with the ones from Xanth... Piers Anthony has a lot to answer for. The original storm-wind goddesses of punishment from Greek myth are much more evocative.

Boris

09-04-2008 11:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9322047)

The original Harpies were meant as a form of divine punishment. Basically they were creatures of waste and gluttony: Whenever the person they were tormenting tried to eat, they would swoop down, eat the food up, defaecate on the rest, then fly away before their victim could retaliate, that way the victim would slowly starve to death, even if they had a lot of food on paper.

I guess that wasn't menacing enough for DnD, so they tacked on the singing power, and its just become tradition by this point (even though they have an actual siren monster later on).

That could make for an interesting adventure - the PCs are lost in some desolate wasteland, with supplies running low. The local nest of harpies are the only ones with any food and they are tormenting the PCs, stealing what little is left of their supplies. So the PCs have to sneak into this narrow canyon system where the harpies live and get enough food to continue their journey.

Crinos

09-04-2008 12:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Boris (Post 9322253)

That could make for an interesting adventure - the PCs are lost in some desolate wasteland, with supplies running low. The local nest of harpies are the only ones with any food and they are tormenting the PCs, stealing what little is left of their supplies. So the PCs have to sneak into this narrow canyon system where the harpies live and get enough food to continue their journey.

Well, the thing is the Harpies only went after you if you pissed off the Gods.

Of course, since the Greek Gods were such massive douchebags it doesn't really take a lot to earn their wrath.

Menteroso

09-05-2008 12:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9322361)

Well, the thing is the Harpies only went after you if you pissed off the Gods.

Of course, since the Greek Gods were such massive douchebags it doesn't really take a lot to earn their wrath.

I've been advised to tell you that, well, the harpies are a-comin'. Something about the phrase "massive douchebags". Sorry for the inconvenience.

-Your pal,
Mercury.

:D

MadWriter

09-05-2008 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Menteroso (Post 9324607)

*I've been advised to tell you that, well, the harpies are a-comin'. Something about the phrase "massive douchebags"
Sorry for the inconvenience.*

-Your pal,
Mercury.

:D

Menteroso--take a laugh point for that one.

Crinos

09-05-2008 01:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Menteroso (Post 9324607)

I've been advised to tell you that, well, the harpies are a-comin'. Something about the phrase "massive douchebags" Sorry for the inconvenience.

*-Your pal,
Mercury.*

:D

Hey, no harm no foul. The Harpies were conceived of in an era that lacked double barrel shotguns. I say bring em on.

And anyways, I'm Christian, so the Greek Gods can suck it.

JRM

09-05-2008 08:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9322013)

Harpy

Whenever I think of Harpies now I always remember that Simpsons episode where Homer and Marge go on a marriage retreat with the church, and they end up in marriage counselling with (I think) Revered Lovejoy and another couple. The other couple are really abusive, hate each other, drink constantly, etc. At one stage the man turns to the woman and says "She's the queen of the harpies! Queen of the harpies!" and starts trying to mount an invisible crown on her head. "Take your crown, o queen!"

Now there's an adventure hook in there somewhere, I've long liked the idea of harpies being led by 'queens' (indeed, I've got a Queen of the Harpies in my campaign), so it'd be interesting to have a scenario where the PCs have to negotiate with her. Mmm, maybe someone stole her crown and they have to retrieve it to stop her subjects terrorizing the land. How did they steal it? Well, this illusionist grabbed it and did a runner after hypnotised them into thinking they had had the crown, and it's only when a visitor wondered why the Queen was having an invisible crown being placed on her head that they twigged.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9322013)

Maybe somebody more informed can tell us more about this, but were Harpies traditionally able to sing, or have the D&D designers just conflated the Harpy and Siren myths into one creature? Also, where does that Harpy in The

Tempest fit into all of this? She was 'good', wasn't she?

The internet is your friend, the theoi website is an excellent resource for Greek mythology. You can see their entry on harpies [here](#).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9324791)

Hey, no harm no foul. The Harpies were conceived of in an era that lacked double barrel shotguns. I say bring em on.

Unfortunately, they were conceived in an era when immortal wind spirits are completely immune to mortal harm - including shotguns. They were only defeated in the Argonaut myth because Jason had some flying demigods on his side who were prophesied to be the harpies' nemeses.

Better watch the skies!

Although that may not do you much good, since by some accounts that they could snatch away a person (or eat a meal & foul the rest) so quickly that they couldn't be seen.

noisms

09-06-2008 01:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hatori

Hatori are a strange one - a kind of mixture of a monitor lizard, saltwater crocodile, sealion and sandworm from *Dune*. They range in size from 10-200' in length, although as the ecology section would have it that they grow at the rate of 1' a year it wouldn't be out of the question to imagine a millenium old, 1000' monster of the desert swimming through the sands and gobbling up entire caravans of camels.

Three points in the entry which SCREAM out and positively OOZE plot:

1 - Once every 10 years all the Hatori in an area get together in the middle of the desert where the males duke it out over the females. Although "no civilized man has ever witnessed these mating rituals", the desert people speak of the "time of thunder when the mountains die" - and this "may" refer to such events.

2 - Hatori eat anything but can't digest gems or magical items: young nobleman with magical family heirloom swallowed by Hatori; PCs hired by his father to recover the item, you do the rest.

3 - Hatori, like Elephants, go to communal grave sites to die. Nobody knows where they are - but they are surely a veritable treasure trove of undigested gems and magic items...

demiurge1138

09-06-2008 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Back in the day, I thought hatori were the coolest things ever. But I've never seen them before or since the Monstrous Compendium. Were they refugees from Dark Sun?

Crinos

09-06-2008 01:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

One of the few times I played DnD, my group encountered a Hatori. It had a holy avenger in its stomach. The teams spell caster took it out with a death spell, and because he used death magic near the avenger, we ended up being sent to Ravenloft.

Good times.

JRM

09-06-2008 02:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9329268)

Back in the day, I thought hatori were the coolest things ever. But I've never seen them before or since the Monstrous Compendium. Were they refugees from Dark Sun?

Hmm, I don't think they're original to Dark Sun, although I'm hardly familiar with the beasts, having never used them in my games. They certainly sound like something you'd find in Dark Sun.

Hmm, after glancing through Wikipedia's AD&D monstrous compendium lists Hatori are in **Monstrous Compendium 4, the Dragonlance Appendix** but aren't on the **monster list for 1st edition monsters**. They are listed as an acceptable monster for Dark Sun on the athos.org supplement Terrors of Athos.

glass

09-06-2008 03:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9329465)

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9329268)

Back in the day, I thought hatori were the coolest things ever. But I've never seen them before or since the Monstrous Compendium. Were they refugees from Dark Sun?

*Hmm, after glancing through Wikipedia's AD&D monstrous compendium lists Hatori are in **Monstrous Compendium 4, the Dragonlance Appendix** but aren't on the **monster list for 1st edition monsters**. They are listed as an acceptable monster for Dark Sun on the athos.org supplement Terrors of Athos.*

My first encounter with them was in the DL MC, but I always assumed they were somewhere else first (since

they don't seem particularly Dragonlancey to me).

glass.

Wakboth

09-06-2008 04:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

On the subject of the harpies, the BECMI D&D basic set mentioned, as a monster variant, a mute harpy who can't sing but plays accordion instead...

JRM

09-06-2008 05:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9329669)

My first encounter with them was in the DL MC, but I always assumed they were somewhere else first (since they don't seem particularly Dragonlancey to me).

Nor me, but I haven't come across any indications of an earlier origin from my (admittedly pretty casual) trawl of the internet but most of the reference that turned up point to them being a Dragonlance beastie (such as **this** or **this**).

I'd check Creature Catalogue but unfortunately the enworld server's down at the moment, they've got a couple of threads over there whose titles suggest hatori are Al-Qadim monsters.

EDIT: Come to think of it, I have a vague recollection of seeing a "desert dragon" monster very similar to a Hatori somewhere. Maybe it did exist earlier under a different name? Or maybe my memory is just acting up again.

JRM

09-06-2008 05:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9329777)

On the subject of the harpies, the BECMI D&D basic set mentioned, as a monster variant, a mute harpy who can't sing but plays accordion instead...

Bah, call that a monster. A harpy's only terrifying if she's also playing a mouth-organ and clashing cymbals with her feet.:)

And why not, that's on a par with some other D&D monsters, like the giant spider who's venom makes you

dance.

Although imagine the possibilities if these musical monsters team up - the tarantella, the accordian-harpy, a siren, an evil satyr, the melodemon (an old Fiend Factory monster).

Hmm, I'm breaking into a theme song here. It's the idea for my next adventure.

Crinos

09-06-2008 06:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Where does the dancing venom spider come from?

JRM

09-06-2008 06:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9330269)
Where does the dancing venom spider come from?

It's based on **Tarantism**, an old Italian belief that the bite of a tarantula (that is the original large wolf-spider kind of tarantula, not the south american Mygalomorph spider) either caused dancing or could be cured by dancing.

The first D&D version I've seen was in the Basic set, where it was a variant giant spider.

Thranguy

09-06-2008 06:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

A lot of the stranger Dragonlance stuff comes from Taladas, the continent on the other side of the world that got one boxed set and then was utterly forgotten. I wouldn't be surprised if the Hatori originally hailed from there...

JRM

09-06-2008 07:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9330415)
A lot of the stranger Dragonlance stuff comes from Taladas, the continent on the other side of the world that got one boxed set and then was utterly forgotten. I wouldn't be surprised if the Hatori originally hailed from there...

I have no idea whether they originated on Taladas or somewhere else on Krynn, we'd need someone more familiar with Dragonlance than I.

The Dragonlance lexicon webpage for Hatori says they're found in the Panak Desert of Hosk, the Northern Wastes, the Plains of Dust and The Desolation. The Panak Desert is in Taladas, but the other three wildernesses are all on the continent of Ansalom.

Steve H

09-06-2008 08:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9330415)

A lot of the stranger Dragonlance stuff comes from Taladas, the continent on the other side of the world that got on boxed set and then was utterly forgotten. I wouldn't be surprised if the Hatori originally hailed from there...

There was also a supplement released on Taladas minotaurs and (my memory says and wiki confirms) a couple of adventures there too.

But yeah, pretty much forgotten.

Belchion

09-06-2008 06:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9322013)

Also, where does that Harpy in The Tempest fit into all of this? She was 'good', wasn't she?

If I remember correctly, classical harpies were also good oracles. I always wanted to to run an adventure where the group has to get into a harpies loft to face the harpies queen - without harming her subjects, because they do not want to kill her, but need her advise...

JRM

09-06-2008 09:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9332043)

If I remember correctly, classical harpies were also good oracles. I always wanted to to run an adventure where the group has to get into a harpies loft to face the harpies queen - without harming her subjects, because they do not want to kill her, but need her advise...

Doesn't ring a bell, the only Greek myths I recall connecting harpies with prophecy is when they punished the oracle Phineas for misusing his powers.

Elemental

09-06-2008 10:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9291537)

It's a fantasy world... maybe the Grimlocks hear the infrasonic singing of Earth elementals resonating through the Underdark and use that to know where things are.

Though younger grimlocks don't like earth music that much. They're more into heavy metal.

Brandi

09-07-2008 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9322013)

Also, where does that Harpy in The Tempest fit into all of this? She was 'good', wasn't she?

What harpy? You mean the disguise the air-spirit Ariel took to scare the men Prospero felt had betrayed him?

Belchion

09-07-2008 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9332334)

Doesn't ring a bell, the only Greek myths I recall connecting harpies with prophecy is when they punished the oracle Phineas for misusing his powers.

Hmm, maybe I mixed something up then. Still I like the idea of a harpy oracle.

noisms

09-07-2008 10:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9333162)

What harpy? You mean the disguise the air-spirit Ariel took to scare the men Prospero felt had betrayed him?

Yeah, that's the one I was thinking of. Been a while since I read that play...

sim_james

09-07-2008 10:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9329268)

Back in the day, I thought hatori were the coolest things ever. But I've never seen them before or since the Monstrous Compendium. Were they refugees from Dark Sun?

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9329669)

My first encounter with them was in the DL MC, but I always assumed they were somewhere else first (since they don't seem particularly Dragonlancey to me).

There's a lot of monsters that originally showed up in DL that work perfectly well in other campaign settings. Krynn isn't all kender and stuff that the Companions saw in the novels!

I just had a quick look at the rulebook from Time of the Dragon (Zeb Cook's first boxed set about Taladas) and hatori aren't in it. I'd guess that they were a monster that first appeared in an obscure section of one of the first edition Dragonlance modules; there's a decent number of deserts in Ansalon. My guess is that they'd be found around the Khur region (being pseudo-Arabic), the Northern Wastes (closer to the equator), or Tanith.

JRM

09-07-2008 10:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9335694)

There's a lot of monsters that originally showed up in DL that work perfectly well in other campaign settings. Krynn isn't all kender and stuff that the Companions saw in the novels!

I just had a quick look at the rulebook from Time of the Dragon (Zeb Cook's first boxed set about Taladas) and hatori aren't in it. I'd guess that they were a monster that first appeared in an obscure section of one of the first edition Dragonlance modules; there's a decent number of deserts in Ansalon. My guess is that they'd be found around the Khur region (being pseudo-Arabic), the Northern Wastes (closer to the equator), or Tanith.

I believe you're right, as I said in an earlier post (#633) the Dragonlance lexicon website says Hatori can be found on Ansalon in the Northern Wastes, the Plains of Dust and The Desolation, as well as the Panek Desert of Hosk.

Anyhow, speaking of Hatori they're an example of one of the things that bothers me about D&D, some of the monsters can be very weak for their size. A 200' long Hatori should weigh somewhere in the region of a thousand tons, but a pair of Mammoths have a fair chance of beating one in a straight-up fight, going by their AD&D stats.

If I where to have AD&D PCs fight monsters that humongous I may have them do reduced damage if they just strike at random parts of their opponent, to do full damage they need to reach small, vulnerable areas (which are either very high AC and/or they need to perform difficult acrobats to reach them, like in **Shadow of the Colossus**).

noisms

09-08-2008 11:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Haunt

The Haunt is a ghost which lurks in a 60 yard area, waiting for passing adventurers it can beat up and possess. It then uses the body to fulfill - of course - a task that it failed to complete in life.

I wonder how most DMs would handle a character being possessed by a Haunt. I seem to remember the 2nd edition DMG saying that the DM should take control of characters who are affected by lycanthropy or other such conditions. But that doesn't sound as interesting as letting the player run the character *as the Haunt*. The DM could write down the Haunt's goal in a secret message and pass it to the player, and he would then have to try his best to achieve it. Meanwhile the other players have to work out what *they're* going to do about it.

Of course, this wouldn't work if the Haunt and the possessee have opposite alignments - because then the Haunt would deliberately strangle itself - a bit like something from a Hammer film.

Haunts can't be hurt by ordinary weapons and only take 1 point of damage from magical or silver ones, plus bonuses. Weirdly, they also take damage from fire. I'm not sure what the justification for that is, other than "we need some way for PCs without silver or magical weapons to be able to hurt them".

Crinos

09-08-2008 12:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9337727)

Haunt

The Haunt is a ghost which lurks in a 60 yard area, waiting for passing adventurers it can beat up and possess. It then uses the body to fulfill - of course - a task that it failed to complete in life.

I wonder how most DMs would handle a character being possessed by a Haunt. I seem to remember the 2nd edition DMG saying that the DM should take control of characters who are affected by lycanthropy or other such conditions. But that doesn't sound as interesting as letting the player run the character as the Haunt. The DM could write down the Haunt's goal in a secret message and pass it to the player, and he would then have to try his best to achieve it. Meanwhile the other players have to work out what they're going to do about it.

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That's actually a pretty good idea: Since the Haunt can't be of an incompatible alignment, that means that it wouldn't be that much of a departure in terms of role playing for the PC.

One thing that bothers me though: Haunts have 0 intelligence. Does that mean they assume their hosts Int, or the one they had in life, or do they just make their host mindless?

JasonK

09-08-2008 05:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Wait, why would the Haunt deliberately strangle itself? Even if it's the opposite alignment, after all, it still has its goal to complete, right?

Or am I missing something?

~ jason

noisms

09-08-2008 08:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9338675)

Wait, why would the Haunt deliberately strangle itself? Even if it's the opposite alignment, after all, it still has its goal to complete, right?

Or am I missing something?

~ jason

I think it strangles itself and then looks for another host. I'm not sure why alignment should make a difference to the Haunt, but apparently it does. Maybe the designers just wanted fun "see if your friends can stop you strangling yourself" scenes.

noisms

09-10-2008 05:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hell Hound

Flame-breathing wild dogs, Fire Giant's Best Friend, or alternatively, a kind of cyberspace program in *Cyberpunk 2020* which fries netrunners' brains.

The Hell Hound entry is an odd one - it almost feels as if it was written by a different author to all the others: somebody who doesn't know all that much about the inner workings of the D&D multiverse. He or she keeps referring in a vague way to "another plane of existence" and "extradimensional planes notable for their fiery, hot landscapes". The entry is also rather thin on superfluous information - in fact it's like how I imagine the 4th edition MM to be (I haven't read it): lots and lots of stats and descriptions of abilities and not a whole lot else.

There's some scope for comedy involving Hell Hound puppies, which "burp" flame once per day, accidentally setting off fires with 'hilarious' results. (I rather think this spoils the Lawful Evil, Hound-of-the-Baskervilles image.) Plot hooks are also provided in the tendency for Hell Hounds to accidentally spark off forest fires (speaking of which, I don't think I've ever run a game in which the characters have had to fight a massive fire - could be fun), and the capturing of puppies for domestication. I also rather like the mention of how "evil beings" brought Hell Hounds to the Prime Material Plane but no reason is given - just the spark a creative DM needs. Maybe an Efreeti Sheikh, now slumbering in the magma in the world's upper mantle, brought them with him when he came six centuries ago, and when he awakes they will rush to meet him and form the vanguard of his conquest of the kingdoms of me. Or something.

It has to be said that the Hell Hound picture is exceedingly weak. Its fiery breath looks not a whole lot more powerful than a zippo lighter. I always imagined Hell Hounds having breath of near-dragon like proportions. (This is probably because of my experience playing roguelike games, in which Hell Hounds are pretty darn nasty.)

JRM

09-10-2008 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9347031)

Hell Hound

The Hell Hound entry is an odd one - it almost feels as if it was written by a different author to all the others: somebody who doesn't know all that much about the inner workings of the D&D multiverse. He or she keeps referring in a vague way to "another plane of existence" and "extradimensional planes notable for their fiery, hot landscapes".

Yes it's a bit odd being so coy about what plane **Hell** Hounds originate from when it's in the name of the monster.

What struck me about their 2nd edition write-up is how stealthy they are in 2nd edition, making them another of AD&D's many "ninja monsters". Don't recall them having bonus sneakiness back in 1st edition.

Don't much like the colour of their monstrous compendium picture, I've always preferred my Hellhounds as black as the pit, or occasionally as red as blood and as white as death. That picture doesn't even look rust-red to me, more dirt-brown.

As for your point about their breath weapon looking weak, well it is weak. Only 1 hp per HD with a 30' range, halved on a save, their teeth can do more damage. Didn't they have to choose between breathing fire *or* biting an opponent in 1st edition, and could only use their fire-breath once every ten rounds? That made their breath weapon pretty useless. Back in my old AD&D game I think I changed it so they could spew flames every round, and could do so while chomping on someone, like they do in the Monstrous Compendium. It just seemed more appropriate.

Wakboth

09-10-2008 10:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9347031)

It has to be said that the Hell Hound picture is exceedingly weak. Its fiery breath looks not a whole lot more powerful than a zippo lighter. I always imagined Hell Hounds having breath of near-dragon like proportions. (This is probably because of my experience playing roguelike games, in which Hell Hounds are pretty darn nasty.)

Hell hound pics have always been pretty weak. As lousy as the 2e MM one is, it's worlds better than the scruffy PoS in 3.0 MM (and why they didn't change that for 3.5, I have no idea...)

JRM

09-10-2008 11:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9347533)

Hell hound pics have always been pretty weak. As lousy as the 2e MM one is, it's worlds better than the scruffy PoS in 3.0 MM (and why they didn't change that for 3.5, I have no idea...)

Do you mean **this one**? I like that a bit better than the Monstrous Compendium version, at least the pose is a bit more dynamic and it hints at the lantern-like eyes that some folklore hellhounds have. Although I don't like the front legs, they make the beast look like it should have a claw/claw attack.

noisms

09-11-2008 01:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9347696)

*Do you mean **this one**? I like that a bit better than the Monstrous Compendium version, at least the pose is a bit more dynamic and it hints at the lantern-like eyes that some folklore hellhounds have. Although I don't like the front legs, they make the beast look like it should have a claw/claw attack.*

It's inarguable they're both a bit naff though. What does the 4e one look like?

JRM

09-11-2008 02:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9348117)

It's inarguable they're both a bit naff though. What does the 4e one look like?

Sorry, I can't even remember whether 4th edition has Hell Hounds yet. I do recall the initial 4E Monster Manual includes yeth hounds, worgs and grave hounds (the latter being a kind of zombie).

Canis Major

09-11-2008 04:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

It's a big wolf-like thing on fire, looking almost more fire-elemental-y. It's face is clear of fire except for the eyes, and flame is streaming back from the mouth. They are infact elemental creatures.

noisms

09-11-2008 11:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Canis Major (Post 9348995)

It's a big wolf-like thing on fire, looking almost more fire-elemental-y. It's face is clear of fire except for the eyes, and flame is streaming back from the mouth. They are infact elemental creatures.

That's one direction to take, I suppose.

E.T.Smith

09-11-2008 01:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Canis Major (Post 9348995)

It's a big wolf-like thing on fire, looking almost more fire-elemental-y. It's face is clear of fire except for the eyes, and flame is streaming back from the mouth. They are in fact elemental creatures.

The Hell Hound is one of the more glaring examples of a real world mythological concept roughly translated into D&D terms with dubious faithfulness (England's ghostly [Black Dogs](#), particularly [Black Shuck](#)) then steadily modified even more over succeeding editions until it has only passing resemblance to the original at all:

Quote:

For centuries, inhabitants of East Anglia have told tales of a large black hellhound with malevolent flaming eyes that are red or alternatively green. They are described as being 'like saucers'. According to reports, the beast varies in size and stature from that of simply a large dog to being the size of a horse.

One stormy summer afternoon in 1577, on Sunday August 4, 1577 to be exact in Bungay he tore through the congregation of St Mary's Church during a service. The fiery dog killed two and left another injured, shrivelled "like : drawn purse".

As the shocked townsfolk reeled from the tragedy, news came that not long before, Shuck had struck just a few mile away at Blythburgh where he had again attacked the church congregation. A man and boy were killed there and others left scorched and hysterical as the church spire crashed through the roof, breaking the font while the tower bells tumbled down.

As the dreadful dog flew from the church, he is said to have left deep scorch marks on the door. The legend continued for centuries even though there were no signs of the marks on the original door. Then, in 1933, the door was cleaned and burn marks - some say they were the devil's own fingerprints - were there for all to see. They remain there today.

Now it's the last part of that story which scared me the most as we stood by the church door with the burn marks, I was only 9 years old when we were told this story by the vicar on a school visit.

http://bp2.blogger.com/_xhaSU796UAo/...s320/shuck.jpg

JRM

09-11-2008 10:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9350569)

The Hell Hound is one of the more glaring examples of a real world mythological concept roughly translated into D&D terms with dubious faithfulness (England's ghostly [Black Dogs](#), particularly [Black Shuck](#)) then steadily modified even more over succeeding editions until it has only passing resemblance to the original at all:

http://bp2.blogger.com/_xhaSU796UAo/...s320/shuck.jpg

Yup, they also remind me of some of the mythic hounds of Celtic and Germanic legend, such as the Hounds of

Annwyn, Hel's watchdog Garm, Fenris (except that he's a wolf), The Wild Hunt etc. I'm no linguist so used the easy spellings, as opposed to Annwn, Garmr, Fenrir which may be more authentic.

noisms

09-12-2008 01:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Heucuva

Heucuvass feel like they come from somewhere outside of D&D, but my extensive research (well, okay, looking it up on wikipedia) didn't turn up much. Anyone know anything on them?

In their D&D iteration they are essentially undead monks or priests who failed to keep up with their vows for some reason and hence were cursed to "roam the darkness" forever - which mostly seems to involve making a nuisance of themselves for adventurers. They give plenty of opportunities for over the top, gothic horror of the cheesiest kind - their lairs are often the ruins of an old abbey or temple filled with corpses arranged in the position of parishioners at a service, while there are also nomadic versions who wander around on endless pilgrimages to nowhere - and in my mind at least carry unholy relics, ring eerie handbells, and are followed everywhere by wisps of fog. (I actually had an encounter with a group of pilgrim Heucuva in two separate campaigns, because it was such a success the first time around.)

Heucuvass are one of my favourite obscure undead monsters, as it happens. There's something to be said for the whole corrupt priest motif, even if Dragonlance did almost ruin the whole 'fallen saint cursed for breaking vows' shtick with Lord Soth. It's another weird example of D&D's unusual relationship to Christian belief, though: Heucuva are clearly based on real world Catholic monastic orders like the Franciscans or Gregorians, except with the monotheism taken out. Obviously we're not supposed to think too deeply about it, but nevertheless I always find it odd when you get these blatantly Christian motifs explored in a Christianity-less world.

Another point to mention is that Heucuvass' XP rating, like that of so many other monsters, is completely unfair and surely wrong. 270 points is surely too little for a monster which is immune to anything except silver and +1 weapons, turns as a wight, can polymorph self 3 times a day, and strikes to infect with a deadly debilitating disease. Okay, they only have 2 HD, but still, they seem far too cheap in terms of bangs for buck.

On the plus side, they can be another addition to the Monsters Whose Corpses Are Useful For Stuff supplement - their ground up bones can be used in the creation of control undead potions or "to corrupt the spirits of living beings" (whatever that means).

Kakita Kojiro

09-12-2008 02:31 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9352489)

... while there are also nomadic versions who wander around on endless pilgrimages to nowhere - and in my mind at least carry unholy relics, ring eerie handbells, and are followed everywhere by wisps of fog.

Great. Now I'm imagining this:

Heucuva: "Pie Iesu Domine. Dona Eis Requiem" *thwack*

Quote:

On the plus side, they can be another addition to the Monsters Whose Corpses Are Useful For Stuff supplement - their ground up bones can be used in the creation of control undead potions or "to corrupt the spirits of living beings" (whatever that means).

It means don't put the stuff in your whisky. It tastes nasty. :)

DMH

09-12-2008 04:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

It is also one of the few creatures to get its name misspelled and the misspelling turned into canon. It was the huecuva initially. One of the tests of trivia in Dragon (150's??) covers this.

JasonK

09-12-2008 05:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9352489)

Heucuva

Wooooooo! This is basically my favorite D&D monster ever. Their pic in the Manual doesn't remotely do them justice - the rough pencil sketch with a cone helm from the Compendium was much more evocative.

You're quite right - they're evocative and spooky as hell, and they do bring something a little special to religion in D&D. The thing that sucks for me is that their listed Intelligence is basically crap (what, 2 - 4?), which precludes them from being the Big Bads such an evocative story involves.

So why do Heucuva do what they do? Why the ritual? Why the pageantry? Why the pilgrimage? Is it in mockery for what they forsook? Is it in service to some new dark lord, tainting holy rituals with impurity? Is it a misguided attempt at redemption? Or is it that they're simply unable to do anything else, cursed to make up for their failures in life by going through the motions endlessly in death?

I think, with their low Int, the game implies the later, but that keeps them in the realm of the simply spooky and that's sad. Me, I'd rather see Heucuva be more like the leadership of the Scarlet Brotherhood in WoW - so fanatical in their zealotry that they're blind to their own perversion. Let them be the Invisible Clergy of a sect of witchhunters, sending their loyal human hounds out to put village after village to the torch for a falsely perceived taint, while at the same time rooting out so many of the real demons lurking in the shadows. Let adventurers work their way up the ranks, tracking witchhunters across blighted moors, calling them out in threatened villages, exposing their allies in the church, grappling with the damage they do versus the good they sometimes serve. And, finally, let them kick open the door of a long-abandoned cathedral to see a congregation of the damned at prayer, led by their Heucuva clergy and let the last battle begin! :)

~ jason

Crinos

09-12-2008 10:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think the reason their XP is so low is because they only have semi intelligent, which sort of limits its threat, even if it is immune to normal weapons and has disease.

Although I don't have the stats, I think they made the canon 3e Huecuva more dangerous by making them smarter and giving them spellcasting powers (I believe, the only contact I have with them is from the order of the stick webcomic, where one of the three undead used by Redcloak during the sapphire city invasion was a Huecuva who nearly killed Hinjo with his clerical magic (the other two being the death Knight and the eye of fear and flame)).

They also changed the spelling from Heucuva to Huecuva.

Speaking of obscure as hell undead, did the Allip and Mohrg ever appear in 2e? or were they 3e exclusive?

demiurge1138

09-12-2008 12:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The heucuva in 3e is a template; clerics keep their spellcasting, but switch their domains to Death and Evil. Paladins can gain the template too--they get blackguard abilities.

Now, don't quote me on this, but I think allips appeared in one of the Monstrous Compendium Appendices as "madness spirits" or the like, whereas the morph was invented for 3e.

kelvingreen

09-12-2008 04:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9353146)

It is also one of the few creatures to get its name misspelled and the misspelling turned into canon. It was the huecuva initially. One of the tests of trivia in Dragon (150's??) covers this.

The name has always rubbed me the wrong way a little. I always read it as "Heck of a..." and while I'm sure that's not right, it has stuck, and it ruins the spookiness of the monster for me. Heck of a what? ;)

noisms

09-12-2008 04:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9353377)

So why do Heucuva do what they do? Why the ritual? Why the pageantry? Why the pilgrimage? Is it in mockery for

what they forsook? Is it in service to some new dark lord, tainting holy rituals with impurity? Is it a misguided attempt at redemption? Or is it that they're simply unable to do anything else, cursed to make up for their failures in life by going through the motions endlessly in death?

I always saw them as having had their sanity blasted by their curse, so they can do nothing except go through the motions of their previously held beliefs. When they see a living being the only thing they can do is attack, driven by their confusion and incoherent rage at their condition.

noisms

09-12-2008 04:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9355156)

The name has always rubbed me the wrong way a little. I always read it as "Heck of a..." and while I'm sure that's not right, it has stuck, and it ruins the spookiness of the monster for me. Heck of a what? ;)

Heck of a spooky undead thing?

JasonK

09-12-2008 06:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9355156)

The name has always rubbed me the wrong way a little. I always read it as "Heck of a..." and while I'm sure that's not right, it has stuck, and it ruins the spookiness of the monster for me. Heck of a what? ;)

I have to admit that, much as I like these guys, the name's always gotten to me, too.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9355158)

I always saw them as having had their sanity blasted by their curse, so they can do nothing except go through the motions of their previously held beliefs. When they see a living being the only thing they can do is attack, driven by their confusion and incoherent rage at their condition.

Fair but, to me, a little uninteresting.

~ jason

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9352489)

Heucuva

Heucuvass feel like they come from somewhere outside of D&D, but my extensive research (well, okay, looking it up on wikipedia) didn't turn up much. Anyone know anything on them?

Should have used google.;)

I remember when I first saw Huecuvas in the Fiend Folio thinking that they were a cool monster that sounded like they might have come from real-world folklore. There was the vaguely central-American sounding name, the shape-changing and disease-inflicting powers and the hints of backstory.

Anyhows, Huecuvas are a **kind of evil spirit** in the mythology of the Auca people of Chile. Huecuvas serve the evil deity Pillan, a god of thunder, lightning & volcanoes, by manifested in all manner of horrifying shapes to inflict sickness, blight harvests, freak weather and other misfortunes upon people.

In the Fiend Folio they have average intelligence and instead of just disguising themselves as humans they can *Polymorph Self* thrice a day, which allows them to assume a much wider range of forms. I prefer that to the 2nd edition version.

But then they're obviously different creatures, since their names aren't spelled the same.:D

I've used them a couple of times in my campaign, the last time I tweaked their Polymorph ability so that most of the shapes they changed into were horrible, rotting apparitions, except that they they could disguise themselves as living humans. However, this human disguise was literally only skin deep. If they got struck their skin could rip to reveal the corruption inside, which also meant they had very bad breath, so couldn't speak without risking giving themselves away, hence the belief they were mute. I guess they could have worn perfume, chewed a lot of garlic, or pretended to be a dung-seller, but the huecuvas my players met hadn't thought of it.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9357127)

In the Fiend Folio they have average intelligence

I assume you mean the 2nd ed version. The first lists them as semi-intelligent.

JRM

09-13-2008 08:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9359136)
I assume you mean the 2nd ed version. The first lists them as semi-intelligent.

Nope, I meant the 1st edition. If it says they're Semi intelligent it's just my memory failing me again, I've always played them as Average intelligence in my games.

noisms

09-14-2008 06:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9357127)
I remember when I first saw Huecuvas in the Fiend Folio thinking that they were a cool monster that sounded like they might have come from real-world folklore. There was the vaguely central-American sounding name, the shape-changing and disease-inflicting powers and the hints of backstory.

Aha, you see I thought the name was vaguely latinate. But now I can see the Amerind thing.

JRM

09-15-2008 02:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9362201)
Aha, you see I thought the name was vaguely latinate. But now I can see the Amerind thing.

Funny, it never occurred to me that Huecuvas (or Heucuvass) was vaguely Latinate, but it does have something of a Spanish/Portuguese ring to it, doesn't it.

noisms

09-15-2008 08:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hippocampus

No, not the part of the brain in charge of short term memory, but an oversized seahorse - the "most prized of marine steeds". Stat-wise they are similar to normal horses, except for the obligatory high intelligence that marine mammals are afforded by the D&D designers. They're not quite on the dolphin level, though.

Try as I might, I have to say I find it hard to say anything even mildly interesting about Hippocampi. I mean - a big seahorse for tritons to ride around on. Need I really say more?

As with Centaurs and Dolphins, I also get a little annoyed at how goody-goody the Hippocampi are. I understand that it's important that good creatures exist in D&D. I'm just not sure why they have to be so bloody *smarmy* with it. It seems like somewhere along the line "good" became confused with "benevolent", when the two terms aren't in fact indistinguishable at all.

There are some unintentionally humorous contradictions in the entry, though - like were it says that Hippocampi will happily allow evil creatures to drown, and will also accidentally drown riders by diving deep underwater and "forgetting" that said rider is a land dweller. Not so benevolent after all, then...

There is an interesting plot hook in the idea of the legend of a 'Great Herd' of thousands of Hippocampi travelling the uncharted reaches of the high seas. It almost sounds like an underwater version of the Great Modron March. Why are the Hippocampi banding together like that and where are they going? Only the adventurers can find out... and so on.

JRM

09-15-2008 11:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9366282)

Hippocampus

Try as I might, I have to say I find it hard to say anything even mildly interesting about Hippocampi. I mean - a big seahorse for tritons to ride around on. Need I really say more?

As with Centaurs and Dolphins, I also get a little annoyed at how goody-goody the Hippocampi are. I understand that it's important that good creatures exist in D&D. I'm just not sure why they have to be so bloody smarmy with it. It seems like somewhere along the line "good" became confused with "benevolent", when the two terms aren't in fact indistinguishable at all.

As far as adventure hooks go, I preferred the bit about rescuing captured hippocampus foals or eggs. Maybe a lone NPC hires the players for a mission of mercy? Also, there's no mention of what language, if any, hippocampi speak, so the local community surface dwellers may just assume they're dumb beasts like regular horses, which makes it more likely they're hunted for meat & hides as well. Now I'm thinking of a "Save the Great Herd from the fleet of (evil?) fishermen who've trapped them in their nesting grounds within a great Caldera" adventure.

There's a couple of odd things about their stats though. They're described as having "a strong bite" and head-butts that "may stun an opponent or break his bones" but their stats only have one attack doing 1d4 damage, with no mention of a "stun" Special Attack. A mere Dolphin does twice as much damage, despite being much smaller and having half its Hit Dice.

Speaking of size, why is the Hippocampus **statted as Huge**? Good grief, that's larger than most AD&D

2E **Elephants**. Surely they should just be Large, like a Heavy Horse or Hippogriff? I'm guessing the author just wrote "14' long" and based the Size category on that, neglecting the importance of shape.

sim_james

09-15-2008 11:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Really long tails.

(Maybe?)

noisms

09-15-2008 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9366604)
Really long tails.

(Maybe?)

Possibly. I actually gave up putting any sort of faith in AD&D 2e sizes a long time ago! ;)

noisms

09-16-2008 12:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9366584)
As far as adventure hooks go, I preferred the bit about rescuing captured hippocampus foals or eggs. Maybe a lone NPC hires the players for a mission of mercy? Also, there's no mention of what language, if any, hippocampi speak, so the local community surface dwellers may just assume they're dumb beasts like regular horses, which makes it more likely they're hunted for meat & hides as well. Now I'm thinking of a "Save the Great Herd from the fleet of (evil?) fishermen who've trapped them in their nesting grounds within a great Caldera" adventure.

You've been talking to PETA girl again, haven't you? ;)

Quite a cool idea actually. A bit like an AD&D version of Greenpeace vs. the Japanese whaling fleet. Actually baby Hippocampi are worth 1500 gps, if I recall, so those fishermen would be highly motivated...

JRM

09-16-2008 12:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9366748)

You've been talking to PETA girl again, haven't you? ;)

Quite a cool idea actually. A bit like an AD&D version of Greenpeace vs. the Japanese whaling fleet. Actually baby Hippocampi are worth 1500 gps, if I recall, so those fishermen would be highly motivated...

I believe she prefers to be called PETA woman these days. ;)

Especially considering the Monstrous Compendium did come out almost twenty years ago, that could be enough time for her to become a PETA Grandmother.

Let's see, thousands of Hippocampi, one offspring per mating pair worth 1500 gp (egg) or 2500 gp (foal). Assuming half eggs, half foals, I make that a minimum of a million gold pieces, not including profit from their parents meat & hide.

Those PCs are going to be facing determined opponents!

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9366604)

Really long tails.

(Maybe?)

Then a standard AD&D2E 10-20' long **Constrictor Snake** would be Huge as well, when in fact they're Medium sized creatures. A 30'+ Giant Constrictor Snake is only Large size. Nope, it makes no sense at all.

Of course, there are some pretty screwy choices of Size for creatures in other versions of D&D, there just seem to be more in 2nd edition AD&D.

Kakita Kojiro

09-16-2008 03:14 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9366604)

Really long tails.

(Maybe?)

Probably. Because the hippocampus? is about the worst design for swimming you could come up with.

Long tails *might* allow it to lumber around, somewhat, but that thing would just founder in the water. Its upright forebody is nothing but adding water resistance, its weird finny feet are shaped entirely wrong for actually *moving* it anywhere. Without a long tail for propulsion they're pretty much very very slow sharkbait.

Of course, it'd be even better if they had vertical, rather than horizontal, flukes on their tail. But not by much.

The Great Herd is probably there because the poor things can't swim anywhere else. Hopefully their triton friends will buy them water-wings or innertubes or something.

Crinos

09-16-2008 04:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9367522)

Probably. Because the hippocampus? is about the worst design for swimming you could come up with.

Long tails might allow it to lumber around, somewhat, but that thing would just founder in the water. Its upright forebody is nothing but adding water resistance, its weird finny feet are shaped entirely wrong for actually moving it anywhere. Without a long tail for propulsion they're pretty much very very slow sharkbait.

Of course, it'd be even better if they had vertical, rather than horizontal, flukes on their tail. But not by much.

The Great Herd is probably there because the poor things can't swim anywhere else. Hopefully their triton friends will buy them water-wings or innertubes or something.

And despite your perfectly logical claims the MM lists their movement speed as 24, twice the normal movement speed for a human.

I hate to see how you'll react at the Zaratan at the end of the book.

kelvingreen

09-16-2008 05:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9366282)

Try as I might, I have to say I find it hard to say anything even mildly interesting about Hippocampi. I mean - a big seahorse for tritons to ride around on. Need I really say more?

I've always wondered how that works; surely riding on a fish-like creature is slippery enough without the rider too having the bottom half of a fish?

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9366584)

Also, there's no mention of what language, if any, hippocampi speak

Elven Cat, obviously.

JRM

09-16-2008 05:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9367522)

Probably. Because the hippocampus? is about the worst design for swimming you could come up with.

Long tails might allow it to lumber around, somewhat, but that thing would just founder in the water. Its upright forebody is nothing but adding water resistance, its weird finny feet are shaped entirely wrong for actually moving it anywhere. Without a long tail for propulsion they're pretty much very very slow sharkbait.

Of course, it'd be even better if they had vertical, rather than horizontal, flukes on their tail. But not by much.

The plural is Hippocampi, following the original Greek.

As for bad designs for swimming, I think I could come up with a worse one easily enough. At least it tapers, has bilateral symmetrical and has a sizable tail fin. Nature's come up with some very undynamic designs for free-swimming animals (although "free floating" would be more honest in most cases, considering how slowly they can move). Have you seen what some **heteromorph Ammonites** looked like?

I agree about the feet, but surely a Hippocampus could stretch its forebody in front of itself when swimming at speed. Plus, doesn't the MM illustration show it with vertical flukes? It's difficult to tell, not that I believe it would make any significant difference. Besides which, suldn't horizontal flukes make sense going by marine mammals like a merman or whale?

Of course, that's assuming it doesn't fall back to the "magic makes it work" for the explanation of their swim speed. Maybe they create a streamlining "bubble of water" around themselves, which also encapsulates any rider. That might help explain how those Tritons stay on their back, especially considering they're sometimes shown with riders but no saddles!

ADDENDUM

I've just had a look at theoi.com **Hippocampoi** page and they didn't have a single picture of a hippocampus rider using a saddle, and that includes nymphs and sea goddesses who rode them side-saddle! Well, bare-back side-saddle if you follow me.

END ADDENDUM

While were on the subject of marine steeds in AD&D, the Giant Sea Horse has a 21" swim speed despite the real-life variety being notoriously sluggish swimmers.

JRM

09-16-2008 06:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9367841)

I hate to see how you'll react at the Zaratan at the end of the book.

Nah, it's got a perfectly reasonable Swim speed. For a 300' turtle.:o

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9367893)
Elven Cat, obviously.

Well Elven Cats do "enjoy swimming and playing in water" :)

Hippocampi are likely just one of the few AD&D2E sapients they forgot to give their own language to. I vote for Zaratan. And yes, a species of giant island-turtles were obviously given their own, unique language.

Crinos

09-16-2008 07:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9368019)
Nah, it's got a perfectly reasonable Swim speed. For a 300' turtle.:o

Yeah but its sex lasts for years!

Kakita Kojiro

09-16-2008 11:00 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9367957)
The plural is Hippocampi, following the original Greek.

Ironically, your own later cite gives the lie to this claim. ;)

Gamers making bad Latin declension guesses are one of my largest pet peeves, what with that peeve being fed so often. I've trained it to bite the head off of anyone who pluralizes "ninja" as "ninjae".

I dread what it will do to the poor thing once we reach P, and someone starts talking about "pegasi". :{

Boris

09-16-2008 04:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9366901)

Let's see, thousands of Hippocampi, one offspring per mating pair worth 1500 gp (egg) or 2500 gp (foal). Assuming half eggs, half foals, I make that a minimum of a million gold pieces, not including profit from their parents meat & hide.

Those PCs are going to be facing determined opponents!

Of course, trying to sell thousands of Hippocampus foals at once would probably drive the price down. There are only so many people who want to buy a big seahorse after all. The market will become saturated and eventually you will be selling the things for coppers to a sausage maker.

I just brought real world economics into a D&D game didn't I? Those poor catgirls.

noisms

09-16-2008 05:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Boris (Post 9369969)

Of course, trying to sell thousands of Hippocampus foals at once would probably drive the price down. There are only so many people who want to buy a big seahorse after all. The market will become saturated and eventually you will be selling the things for coppers to a sausage maker.

I just brought real world economics into a D&D game didn't I? Those poor catgirls.

BOGOF Hippocampoi.

JRM

09-17-2008 12:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9369052)

Ironically, your own later cite gives the lie to this claim. ;)

Gamers making bad Latin declension guesses are one of my largest pet peeves, what with that peeve being fed so often. I've trained it to bite the head off of anyone who pluralizes "ninja" as "ninjae".

I dread what it will do to the poor thing once we reach P, and someone starts talking about "pegasi". :(

Sure the original Greek used Hippokampoi, I said following not matching.:cool:

Didn't think it worth mention that it was the Latin spelling, which English tends to prefer for classical Greek words that the ancient Romans had got their hands on. I also forgot the switch from -kampos/kampoi to -campus/campi.

Pegasus/Pegasi is in the same situation, don't see anything wrong with English using the Latin form Pegasi. If we stuck to the original Greek shouldn't it be Pegasos?

ADDENDUM

Of course, there's the additional problem in that Pegasus/os was one creature. I've been trying to find a classical source that gives a plural form, theoi.com gives the Latin plural as Pegasi and quotes Pliny describing **Ethiopian Pegasi** with the translation "winged horses armed with horns, called Pegasi." Unfortunately, after checking **Book 8 Chapter 72 of Pliny's Natural History** it looks like he used the Greek singular ("Pegasos") when talking about these winged horses ("pinnatos equos"). He also uses Pegasos in Book 10 Chapter 136.

Maybe we could just make up a name for them, like *Pterhippus*?
END ADDENDUM

As for ninjæ? Good grief! Don't these people know its ninji.:D
(Joke! Joke! Please take my head out of your jaws!)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Boris (Post 9369969)

Of course, trying to sell thousands of Hippocampus foals at once would probably drive the price down. There are only so many people who want to buy a big seahorse after all. The market will become saturated and eventually you will be selling the things for coppers to a sausage maker.

Actually that million gold pieces was just the Monstrous Compendium market price for 250 Hippocampi foals and 250 eggs. But yes, market saturation could be a worry. Then again, it depends on what kind of campaign it is. A wealthy empire wanting to form a marine cavalry unit would probably want several hundred of them, and individually they cost no more than +1 swords, and we know how many of those are floating around D&Dland.

That begs the question of why the theoretical buyer in such a high-level campaign doesn't just hire some wizards to *Polymorph Other* a few hundred rabbits into Hippocampi. It would be a lot cheaper and easier.

kelvingreen

09-17-2008 03:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9370870)

As for ninjæ? Good grief! Don't these people know its ninji.:D

Ninjax, actually.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9370870)

Then again, it depends on what kind of campaign it is. A wealthy empire wanting to form a marine cavalry unit would probably want several hundred of them, and individually they cost no more than +1 swords, and we know how many of those are floating around D&Dland.

Assuming they want them for purposes of utility. Demanding that many hippokampoi ninjaxes to me suggests that they're prized for nutritional value.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9370870)

That begs the question of why the theoretical buyer in such a high-level campaign doesn't just hire some wizards to Polymorph Other a few hundred rabbits into Hippocampi. It would be a lot cheaper and easier.

The pesky wizard's union frowns on such practices.

JRM

09-17-2008 03:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9371554)

The pesky wizard's union frowns on such practices.

Yes, but that union only has one member, namely pesky wizard. All the other wizards just ignore it.;

More seriously, why would an organisation of wizards object to such practices if it earns them money and the favour of a nation, are they are getting bribes & cutbacks from the Sea-Caballeros?

EDIT: Cutbacks? Egad! It was supposed to be kick-backs, which makes a lot more sense.

Kakita Kojiro

09-17-2008 10:04 AM

Now, the idea of sea-caballeros is one worth exploiting, I'd think. Y'all git ta round up mustang hippokampoi, git on a sea-cattle drive, fight off sahuagin rustlers... and talk in stereotypical cowboy slang. Or, *Spanish* cowboy slang!

JRM

09-17-2008 05:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9373392)

Now, the idea of sea-caballeros is one worth exploiting, I'd think. Y'all git ta round up mustang hippokampoi, git on a sea-cattle drive, fight off sahuagin rustlers... and talk in stereotypical cowboy slang. Or, Spanish cowboy slang!

Si, let mee tell you senor, those sahuagin are thee worst for they sweem faster than a caballito de mar, how you say a horse of the sea. Wee had to leave Eduardo's kitchen-boat and some of our poor compadres behind with those devil fishee-hombres, may holy Pholtus have meercy on their souls.

One of my "this would make a cool game, but I've never gotten around to it" ideas was basically **Rawhide** the D&D campaign. Just transfer that to a marine environment (Salthide?) and give everyone [EDIT: pseudo-Mexican?] accents, and you're mostly there.

Crinos

09-17-2008 09:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9374831)

Si, let mee tell you senor, those sahuagin are thee worst for they sweem faster than a caballito de mar, how you say horse of the sea. Wee had to leave Eduardo's kitchen-boat and some of our poor compadres behind with those devil fishee-hombres, may holy Pholtus have meercy on their souls.

*One of my "this would make a cool game, but I've never gotten around to it" ideas was basically **Rawhide** the D&D campaign. Just transfer that to a marine environment (Salthide?) and give everyone [EDIT: pseudo-Mexican?] accents, and you're mostly there.*

Dammit, now I cant help but imagine Sahuagin wearing sombreros and ponchos with long twirly mustaches.

JRM

09-17-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9375170)

Dammit, now I cant help but imagine Sahuagin wearing sombreros and ponchos with long twirly mustaches.

That inspired me to waste more time than I can really spare trawling deviant art for an appropriate picture. I netted a lot of **pirate fish**, but the closest thing to a Sahuagin in a Sombrero I could find was **this**.

Let mee tell you senor, sure those Sahuagin banditos are bad, but the **Jarabe** Sahuagin are the most feendish of them all. Even the strongest sea-caballero weell feel the terror cracking his heart when they hear their monstrous marine Mariachi music playing across the waves.

JRM

09-18-2008 02:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9375538)

*Let mee tell you senor, sure those Sahuagin banditos are bad, but the **Jarabe** Sahuagin are the most feendish of ther all. Even the strongest sea-caballero weell feel the terror cracking his heart when they hear their monstrous marine Mariachi music playing across the waves.*

Although there ees one small mercy my freend, my compadres and I have yet to face a Sahuagin Pistolero or Carabinero who could keep hees powder dry.

noisms

09-18-2008 12:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hippogriff

The poor Hippogriff. Forever overshadowed by his horse-guzzling cousin the Griffin, and cursed with one of the worst illustrations in the history of fantasy bestiaries, he's a sadly overlooked monster, forever doomed to the lower reaches of random encounter tables for mountainous areas.

I do like Hippogriffs, I think mainly because I used to have a Hippogriff model in my old Dwarf Warhammer army. He used to soar around the rear ranks of my enemies' armies, attacking war machines and spreading fear and destruction in his wake. The AD&D version seems a bit less ferocious, mainly I think because the entry devotes about two-thirds of its length to describing the monsters' family lives and how the babies behave, which is interesting but not very monstrous.

As well as random encounters, adventurers might come across Hippogriffs for a few other reasons - egg thieving and youth abduction (natch), raiding treasure troves (Hippogriffs are magpie-like in their attraction for shiny things) and riding. Riding is obviously the most interesting of these - nothing beats flying steeds in a D&D session. I also like the idea of a party of characters trailing across a range of barren hills, suddenly having to flee for scampy cover as a flock of Hippogriff-riding Hobgoblin raiders comes sweeping in from the grey sky...

YojimboC

09-18-2008 01:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Oh yeah, griffins are totally cooler than hippogriffs. Half-eagle and half-lion, or half-eagle and half-horse?

I think I may have used hippogriffs at some point in the distant past, probably 1E, actually, but flying animals didn't feature too prominently in my games. Regular mounts didn't feature too prominently -- we were too busy running around the planes. On foot.

noisms

09-18-2008 03:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9379172)

Oh yeah, griffins are totally cooler than hippogriffs. Half-eagle and half-lion, or half-eagle and half-horse?

I think I may have used hippogriffs at some point in the distant past, probably 1E, actually, but flying animals didn't feature too prominently in my games. Regular mounts didn't feature too prominently -- we were too busy running around the planes. On foot.

There isn't much of a contest between Hippogriffs and Griffons. Though the key advantage of a horse - ability to gallop and bear riders - could be exploited better. For example, Hippogriffs should be able to take huge running jumps to gain extra speed, etc.

demiurge1138

09-18-2008 05:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I actually had a mountain range in my game that was well-known as the native range of hippogriffs. Of course, this meant that the party didn't actually encounter any, except as seeing them off in the distance. Likewise, my girlfriend was going to play a character in my current game who was a hippogriff-riding paladin... but got dissuaded by the mechanics and decided to play a swashbuckler instead.

So hippogriffs are basically my Monster of Missed Opportunities. Always so close to getting some limelight, always getting pushed back...

Wakboth

09-18-2008 08:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9379449)

There isn't much of a contest between Hippogriffs and Griffons. Though the key advantage of a horse - ability to gallop and bear riders - could be exploited better. For example, Hippogriffs should be able to take huge running jumps to gain extra speed, etc.

I thought the chief advantage of hippogriffs was that your steed wasn't continuously raring for a bloody horse steak, and ready to ignore your orders to get one? :)

Overall, flying mounts are kind of underused in (A)D&D; teleportation and the various flying magical items have in my experience replaced them almost entirely.

sim_james

09-18-2008 10:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I have an irrational fondness for hippogriffs. Buckbeak was my favourite part of any Harry Potter film.

I imagine that they'd be a darn sight easier to train than griffons!

Crinos

09-18-2008 10:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think the original mythological concept behind the Hippogriff was that it was the offspring of a Griffon and a Horse, which made it an even more fantastic animal than a Griffon because Griffons and horses are natural enemies.

JRM

09-19-2008 08:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hey! I hadn't finished fooling around with my Caballeros de Mer yet, and you're already on the Hippogriffs.:mad:

Anyhows, I forgot to mention that a few ancient sources indicate that when Poseidon's Hippokampoi/Hippocampi came out onto land their fish-tails turned into the hindquarters of horses, so they could gallop about to their hearts desire. Now all they need to do is cross it with a pegasus to add wings, intelligence and speech and you've got a great adventurer's mount...

...A walking, talking, swimming, flying living steed.:o

As for our current beastie. Crinos is right about the myths considering Hippogriffs an even more fantastic animal than a Griffin, due to the latter's enmity towards horses. The book Orlando Furioso has a magician who created a Hippogriff - I guess that's one of the reasons they invented the *Philter of Love*.

Hippogriffs make much more desirable steeds than Griffins, combining the desirable traits of both horse (a tamable mount that doesn't need to eat meat) and gryphon (flight, beak & claws for offense). Old myths and bestiaries indicate Gryphons prefer eating humans to offering them a taxi service.

I don't think there are many stories of gryphons being ridden by people, although they were sometimes used by magicians, and gods such as Apollo, as steeds or to draw their chariots.

Wasn't there an ancient Greek myth of a sorceress with a chariot drawn by Gryphons? Hmm, wasn't Medea, she used dragons.

noisms

09-20-2008 11:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hobgoblin

Hooray! For some reason as I was about to open up the MM just now I was expecting to be let down by something Hippocampus--esque and boring. I'd forgotten all about Hobgoblins, which I think are everybody's favourite bad-guy

monster after Gnolls.

One of my better campaign settings was a continent which had been completely taken over by a coalition of hobgoblin generalissimos some two centuries previously. All the other races had either fled or been wiped out, with gnome and halfling slaves all that remained. But hobgoblins being hobgoblins, it wasn't long before civil war broke out, and 200 years of war ensued, in which a once verdant land was reduced to desert and ash, criss-crossed by old lines of trenches and dotted with abandoned fortifications. Demographic loss had been catastrophic, and the war had descended into a scabble for the last few resources available. And meanwhile, the Duergar empire in the mountains to the East was watching the descent into chaos, and planning its conquest...

Anyway. Hobgoblins. One of the things I really like about the 2nd edition MM is its detailed expositions of how bands of hobgoblins, orcs, goblins etc. are composed. It really shows D&D's wargame roots - "Hobgoblins in a typical force will be equipped with polearms (30%), morningstars (20%), swords and bows (20%), spears (10%), swords and spears (10%), swords and morning stars (5%), or swords and whips (5%)" - but it also makes it easier to imagine how the creatures fit into the wide world itself. Hobgoblins aren't just evil things for the players to kill. They are part of something bigger. ("In addition to the warriors present in a hobgoblin tribe, there will be half again that many females and three times as many children as adult males. Fully 80% of all known hobgoblin lairs are subterranean complexes. The remaining 20% are surface villages which are fortified with a ditch, fence, 2 gates, and 3-6 guard towers. Villages are often built upon ruined humanoid settlements and may incorporate defensive features already present in the ruins. Hobgoblin villages possess artillery in the form of 2 heavy catapults, 2 light catapults, and a ballista for each 50 warriors. Underground complexes may be guarded by 2-12 carnivorous apes (60%).")

Koalinth

Marine species of evil humanoids are a familiar D&D trope, and they get my vote for being cool. I'm not sure I've ever used Koalinths in a game, though; a situation I soon hope to recitify.

YojimboC

09-20-2008 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hobgoblins. Now we're on to something. I absolutely love hobgoblins. They're so totally bad-ass and tough and brutal, they make most of the other (1HD) humanoids look like pansies.

There's an utterly fantastic illustration in one of the Monstrous Compendiums (remember the dividers?) by Jim Holloway that shows a hobgoblin army done up in vaguely Mongolian/Central Asian manner, having triumphed over a force of humans. I think that had some kind of serious impact on me -- I'd used hobgoblins before, but at some point after that I decided they were the coolest. And I remember that I derived a hobgoblin fighter named Dzubokai from *The Orcs of Thar*, also with art by Holloway.

Jumping editions for a moment, one of the big selling points for the *Kingdoms of Kalamar* setting for me was the inclusion of not one, but two hobgoblin run kingdoms and the use of half-hobgoblins to go along with half-orcs as a player character race. The setting really played up hobgoblins as the D&D equivalent of klingons -- honorable, warrior-oriented, but ultimately evil culture. Great foes and also workable as allies on occasion.

I'm aware of the DiTirlizzi love in this thread, and normally I'm a huge fan, but I have to say that his hobgoblin illo pales in comparison to the picture from the Monstrous Compendium (again by Holloway, if memory serves), which shows a hulking hobgoblin with a brutal looking morningstar that just rocks on toast. I wish they had colored it and used it in the MM.

demiurge1138

09-20-2008 12:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I love the Di Terlizzi hobgoblin; all sneers and threats, with Mongol-inspired fur garb. Haven't seen the Holloway hobgoblin, though.

checks massive archive of 2e PDFs

OK, it's good. Not DiTerlizzi good, though.

Anyway, Eberron treats hobgoblins in a similar way to Kingdoms of Kalamar--they're successful humanoids. In Eberron, the hobgoblins once were the rulers of an empire, Dhakaan, which stretched over the whole continent. Weakened by skirmishes with the elves, the empire was shattered by the incursion of the daelkyr (a race of flesh-warping Nyarlathoteps from the Realm of Madness). In recent years, though, hobgoblin mercenaries used the Last War as an excuse to seize territory from the warring kingdoms and establish a new empire, Darguun.

For some reason, whenever I run hobgoblins, they always end up overshadowed by either goblins or bugbears in their midst. For example, an Eberron game I ran featured a gang of hobgoblin slavers from the aforementioned Darguun, but the ship's captain, a bellicose bugbear named Captain Gnash Ratcatcher, stole the show (his armament of a wooden door as a shield and a magical talking truncheon might have had something to do with that...).

Kakita Kojiro

09-20-2008 12:28 PM

Good grief, Koalinths! I had completely forgotten there were aquatic hobgoblins. Lacedeons, scraggs, *those* I've used. Guess I never sent low-level PCs on an aquatic adventure and had to go looking for appropriate fodder.

I'm actually a little surprised that later editions didn't make anything of them, either.

E.T.Smith

09-20-2008 01:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

When did Hobgoblins first pick up their official flavor of disciplined, militarized and vaguely oriental that has become unquestioned in nearly all traditional fantasy rpgs? I think 1st ed. MM pictured its hobgoblin as wearing a samurai-like suit of armor; was that all it took?

Kakita Kojiro

09-20-2008 04:10 PM

I think that hobgoblins became more organized and militarized to distinguish them from orcs. As the latter staked a claim on the Chaotic Evil, monstrous equivalent to Huns and Mongols, they needed to find a Lawful Evil trope that fit the hobgoblins. And, hey, evil legions seems a natural complement to evil barbarian hordes.

And those breakouts of hobgoblin armaments *almost* look like a Roman legion + auxiliaries... if you handed out morningstars and polearms in addition to the gladius + pilum, I guess.

Not sure about any vaguely oriental flavor, though.

Wakboth

09-20-2008 04:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

On the Roman-looking hobgoblins, [here's a wallpaper](#) showing a legion of them, done by Claudio Pozas. Very *Gladiator*. :)

And yeah, hobgoblins are the humanoids who have "made it". I'm a little surprised it took until Kalamar and Eberron for hobgoblin empires to become canonical part of the setting; they've been lawful, strong and militaristic, with human-level smarts, since the 1e (or before). If, say, dwarves can have their kingdoms, why not hobgoblins? (The answer, of course, used to be "They're humanoids, and therefore unlevelled ugly sword fodder.")

demiurge1138

09-20-2008 05:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9387496)

I think that hobgoblins became more organized and militarized to distinguish them from orcs. As the latter staked a claim on the Chaotic Evil, monstrous equivalent to Huns and Mongols, they needed to find a Lawful Evil trope that fit the hobgoblins. And, hey, evil legions seems a natural complement to evil barbarian hordes.

Of course, in 1e and 2e orcs were also lawful. Gruumsh lives in Acheron, remember. I think orcs were made chaotic in 3e to differentiate them more from hobgoblins, actually.

JRM

09-20-2008 06:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9386910)

Hobgoblin

Hooray! For some reason as I was about to open up the MM just now I was expecting to be let down by something Hippocampus--esque and boring. I'd forgotten all about Hobgoblins, which I think are everybody's favourite bad-guy monster after Gnolls.

Ay! Boring? You 'ave eensulted the honor of the noble Hippocampo, my muchachos will puneesh you!

As for your Hobgoblins, I curse the day their generalissimos drove us into the mer. They are as evil as the Sombrero-danceeng Sahuagin, you know. Now they pursue us on the sea, in galleys armed with ballistae. At leest they do not bring their man-eating gorillas with them. They do not just use them as watchdogs in their homes, you know, when a carneeavorous ape can fight beside them in battle. A Simio de guerra is a fearsome sight, let me teel you, in eets spiked armour as eet stands upon the corpses of your frieends bellowing eets war-cry.*

Who let that Sea-Caballero back in here? Shoo! Shoo!!

*In case your curious, the previous message was inspired by Noism mentioning Hobgoblin *generalissimos* which, naturally, made me think of Mexican Army Hobgoblins.

So it's all his fault.:)

Hobgoblins can speak Carnivorous Ape, so it makes sense to me that they'd find other uses for them than household pets. Just imagine what would happen if Tarzan was evil and Cheeta was seven-feet tall and could casually tear people's heads off.:eek:

"Send the War Apes into the forest after those elves!"
"Cheeta! Climb up that wall with this rope ladder!"
"Tear that prisoner's arms off and see if the others will talk!"
...et cetera

Anyhows, I believe the idea of hobgoblins as "über-orcs" comes from Tolkien, as in **Uruk-Hai**. There are several references to large goblins being called "hobgoblins" (e.g. in the Hobbit). Your folklore hobgoblin was a small fey creature, a sprite or (fairy) goblin that was usually mischievous rather than malignant.

As for Hobgoblin kingdoms, that notion long predates Orcs becoming Chaotic Evil, which didn't happen until 3rd edition. Well, not in the Basic-Immortals D&D series, obviously, which just had a Law-Neutral-Chaos alignment axis, with most monsters on the Chaos side. Then again, Orcs had highly disciplined military kingdoms as well back when they were LE. Wasn't there an adventure in Dungeon magazine that featured an invading orc army from one such land? Dungeon #32's *The Siege of Kratys Freehold*, unless I'm mistaken.

kelvingreen

09-20-2008 06:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The Warhammer world also has organised, imperial, hobgoblins as part of the backstory. I think it was called the Hobgoblin Hegemony, and was your average fallen empire; the Chaos Dwarfs took over when it collapsed, as I recall. The Hegemony has been hinted at in the fluff for decades, but I don't think we've seen any concrete information, since the hobgoblins tend to get lumped in with all the other C-list races that never get army books.

As I recall, the Warhammer hobgoblins also get decked out in vaguely-East-Asian garb (the Hegemony was located in Warhammer's Mongolia, I think). I'd love to know where that particular association comes from, as it seems rather pervasive across a number of franchises.

noisms

09-20-2008 07:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9387644)
Of course, in 1e and 2e orcs were also lawful. Gruumsh lives in Acheron, remember. I think orcs were made chaotic in 3e to differentiate them more from hobgoblins, actually.

Yep. Actually 2e had more major Lawful Evil races than any other: Goblins, Orcs, Hobgoblins and Kobolds were all LE. Gnolls, Bugbears and Troglydites were the only CE ones I can think of amongst the "bad guy" races. And Drow I suppose. And it's hard to think of a NE one. Grell?

JRM

09-20-2008 10:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9387797)

Yep. Actually 2e had more major Lawful Evil races than any other: Goblins, Orcs, Hobgoblins and Kobolds were all LE. Gnolls, Bugbears and Troglydites were the only CE ones I can think of amongst the "bad guy" races. And Drow I suppose. And it's hard to think of a NE one. Grell?

Yuan-Ti are Chaotic Evil. Bullywugs and Ogres too, although they arguably don't count as a major race.

EDIT: I can't think of any NE sapient races of living creature in 2e.

The Last Conformist

09-21-2008 02:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9387694)

The Warhammer world also has organised, imperial, hobgoblins as part of the backstory. I think it was called the Hobgoblin Hegemony, and was your average fallen empire; the Chaos Dwarfs took over when it collapsed, as I recall The Hegemony has been hinted at in the fluff for decades, but I don't think we've seen any concrete information, since the hobgoblins tend to get lumped in with all the other C-list races that never get army books.

As I recall, the Warhammer hobgoblins also get decked out in vaguely-East-Asian garb (the Hegemony was located in Warhammer's Mongolia, I think). I'd love to know where that particular association comes from, as it seems rather pervasive across a number of franchises.

Actually, I believe the hobgoblin empire is supposed to be still live and kicking in the "present" of the Warhammer world. There's a regiment of renown of renegade hobgoblins from there, who sport vaguely Mongol gear.

There are also hobgoblin slave-troops in the Chaos Dwarf list, who like their masters sport vaguely Assyrian gear. I don't recall whether there is a current official Chaos Dwarf army list, but they're definitely there in the background material.

(Note for non-warhammerers: in the Warhammer world, hobgoblins are stronger than goblins but not as tough as orcs. The extra-tough greenskin rôle is played by the black orcs. There are also gnoblar, who are weedier than even goblins, and snotlings, who are weedier yet - so weedy, in fact, that they occur as swarms rather than individual critters.)

Elliott

09-21-2008 02:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Orcs have gone from chaotic to lawful and then back to chaotic. Like back when they had pig heads.

Basically I think the reason this happened was the same reason modern orcs don't look like people with pig heads: in

the 80s and especially the 90s there was a cross pollination of ideas about what orcs looked like and did. The Warhammer and the Warcraft series IMO really made them into what they are today: Turning them from brutal and militaristic but fairly ordered soldiers into a slaving horde of barbarians.

kelvingreen

09-21-2008 03:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9388474)

Actually, I believe the hobgoblin empire is supposed to be still live and kicking in the "present" of the Warhammer world.

That'll be a more recent change, I'd guess, but then I've not kept up with the game in years. It always used to be a fallen empire. ;)

JRM

09-21-2008 05:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Elliott (Post 9388537)

Orcs have gone from chaotic to lawful and then back to chaotic. Like back when they had pig heads.

Basically I think the reason this happened was the same reason modern orcs don't look like people with pig heads: in the 80s and especially the 90s there was a cross pollination of ideas about what orcs looked like and did. The Warhammer and the Warcraft series IMO really made them into what they are today: Turning them from brutal and militaristic but fairly ordered soldiers into a slaving horde of barbarians.

Since we've got seven whole letters before we reach 'O' I think I'll save the few thoughts on Orcs that I can muster, except maybe...

...bring back the pig heads!:p

noisms

09-21-2008 10:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9388999)

Since we've got seven whole letters before we reach 'O' I think I'll save the few thoughts on Orcs that I can muster, except maybe...

...bring back the pig heads!:p

When I was a kid, reading LOTR for the first time, I imagined orcs having crocodile heads. I have no idea why.

Crinos

09-21-2008 12:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I'm personally more of a fan of the Green, muscular, tusked, but otherwise human looking orcs.

Course, I'm also a Dominic Deegan fan (which uses that body type of Orc) but I digress.

noisms

09-21-2008 01:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9390029)

I'm personally more of a fan of the Green, muscular, tusked, but otherwise human looking orcs.

Course, I'm also a Dominic Deegan fan (which uses that body type of Orc) but I digress.

Anyway, let's not metaphorically blow our orc wad before we get to the entry! ;)

David J Prokopetz

09-21-2008 01:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9390029)

Course, I'm also a Dominic Deegan fan [...]

I have lost all respect for you.

JRM

09-21-2008 06:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9390101)

Anyway, let's not metaphorically blow our orc wad before we get to the entry! ;)

With AD&D orcs it's rarely metaphorical, they'll try to breed with anything you know.:eek:

JRM

09-21-2008 06:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9390124)

I have lost all respect for you.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9390029)

I'm personally more of a fan of the Green, muscular, tusked, but otherwise human looking orcs.

Course, I'm also a Dominic Deegan fan (which uses that body type of Orc) but I digress.

Don't worry Crinos, I still respect you despite your clichéd taste in orcs.;

I enjoy Dominic Deegan, too.

Crinos

09-22-2008 12:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9390124)

I have lost all respect for you.

wait...wait.... let me check something.....

Nope. Don't care. Wait..... No, definitely don't care, not even a little. Thought I might, but it was just gas.

Sorry.

JRM

09-23-2008 06:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Tap... Tap... Hello?

Is there anyone out there!

It's so lonely here.:(

What's going on - did Crinos murder the thread?, was everyone driven off by Sea-Caballeros?, or is the whole information superhighway too busy bickering over 3rd/4th edition to have a civil discussion about AD&D hobgoblins? ;)

noisms

09-23-2008 09:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Because of my stupid IP I haven't been able to get online for about 48 hours. Things seem okay now though. Homonculous entry coming up. Talk amongst yourselves. ;)

JRM

09-23-2008 09:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9398398)

Because of my stupid IP I haven't been able to get online for about 48 hours. Things seem okay now though. Homonculous entry coming up. Talk amongst yourselves. ;)

Hiya Noisms, glad to hear from you. It was getting to feel like I was talking to myself around here.

So JRM, what do you think about Homunculi?

noisms

09-23-2008 10:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Homonculus

"Small mystical beings created by wizards for spying and other special tasks," Homonculi are basically like Gremlins from the film *Gremlins*, except with wings and without the cute Mogwai alter-ego. It's main power of attack is to bite to cause sleep, though it isn't a combat machine - it's mainly a little mobile CCTV camera for the wizard to send around to do his bidding.

Homonculi are cool, but I do have to wonder if they're entirely worth the amount of trouble and money that goes into making them. Not only does a wizard have to spend up to 2,000 gps and give a pint of his blood, he also has to wait 1-4 weeks and cast all kinds of spells; not only that, but the Homonculi turns into a kind of achilles heel for the wizard, as if it is destroyed (a pretty easy thing to do) it causes him damage.

One of the better plot hooks in the MM is provided in the final paragraph:

Quote:

There are rumors of magical means by which non-wizards can acquire their own form of homonculous. Although these are not widely believed to be valid, there are those who report having seen the process or its results first hand. If such a procedure exists, it would be quite valuable to its discoverer.

This seems like the start of a grand adventure if ever there was one.

t@nya

09-23-2008 10:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9398547)

Homonculi are cool, but I do have to wonder if they're entirely worth the amount of trouble and money that goes into making them. Not only does a wizard have to spend up to 2,000 gps and give a pint of his blood, he also has to wait 1-4 weeks and cast all kinds of spells; not only that, but the Homonculi turns into a kind of achilles heel for the wizard, as if it is destroyed (a pretty easy thing to do) it causes him damage.

I believe there was a Dragon magazine article which had variant homoculi with different powers and attributes (I forget what those were, unfortunately, and I no longer have the magazine), due to slight variations in the rituals used to make them. It would be easy enough to, say, have a type of homonculus that can turn invisible and fly, leading to the creatures being much more useful for surveillance and less likely to be discovered and killed.

DMH

09-23-2008 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

They are one of the more nifty adaptations of movie monsters. One of the Sinbad (Golden Voyage?) films has a homonculus that looks identicle to that in the MM. When it was slain, the creator aged.

Too bad they are so weak, otherwise they would be very useful for wizards of all levels. And alchemists as well (if the creators are willing to fork over the xp, the homonculi could even be disposable for dangerous experiments).

demiurge1138

09-24-2008 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Well, the homonculi dying = wizard getting screwed is pretty much equivalent to the unfortunate side-effects of familiars, with the advantage that the homonculus is slightly less squishy. And you can rebuild it faster than you can summon a new familiar (a year and a day, I believe).

I've actually had a couple of players build homonculi, especially in/from Eberron. They have a whole bunch of variant homonculi, like the ones described above, that do things like fight, shoot, deliver messages, steal and make magic items for you (you spend the money and XP, but they spend the time). That last one was very popular.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9398666)

They are one of the more nifty adaptations of movie monsters. One of the Sinbad (Golden Voyage?) films has a homonculus that looks identicle to that in the MM. When it was slain, the creator aged.

Too bad they are so weak, otherwise they would be very useful for wizards of all levels. And alchemists as well (if the creators are willing to fork over the xp, the homonculi could even be disposable for dangerous experiments).

It was *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1974), my favourite among Ray Harryhausen and Charles H. Schneer's Sinbad films.

There are a few differences from the D&D Homonculus and the historical legends about Homunculus, apart from the spelling change that is. Traditional Homunculi were imagined as looking like perfect little humans, or as vaguely human-shaped mandrake roots. They didn't resemble tiny bat-winged devil-men like in AD&D or that Sinbad film, or have a sleep-causing bite, and were created from the magician's sperm, not his blood.

EDIT: 3rd edition spelled Homunculus correctly, so it may only be the 2nd edition MM (or just the **dotd webpage**) that got the spelling wrong. I'm too lazy to check. :END EDIT

Oh, and I believe they were usually kept in the laboratory bottles as curiosities and/or sources of supernatural intelligence or conversation, rather than being sent out as spies.

Notice that the Monstrous Compendium Homonculus "knows everything that its master knows", does that mean you can capture one, take it outside its master's 480 yard control range, and torture/charm it into revealing all its creator's secrets?

There's a "rescue the wizard's homonculus" adventure hook right there, especially if the creator is a wealthy but low-level wizard* who might die from the 2d10 damage if the homonculus is killed, a variant on the "stay were you are wizard, or your familiar get's it!" ploy.

EDIT: *Hmm, the 2nd edition Homonculus requires the spells *Mending*, *Mirror Image*, and *Wizard Eye*. The latter spell is 4th level unless I'm mistaken, so you'd need a 7th level wizard (or one who can afford scrolls) to make one of these beasties. :END EDIT

Speaking of levels, I believe that in 1st edition AD&D a magic-user had to reach a minimum level to create a Homunculus, something around 14th? In my experience that made it even less likely for wizards to bother making them, since a wizard of that level had lots of other ways to spy on his enemies that weren't as risky. Plus, if I remember correctly they were more expensive than the 2nd edition version.

David J Prokopetz

09-24-2008 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9399288)

*EDIT: *Hmm, the 2nd edition Homonculus requires the spells Mending, Mirror Image, and Wizard Eye. The latter spell is 4th level unless I'm mistaken, so you'd need a 7th level wizard (or one who can afford scrolls) to make one of these beasties. :END EDIT*

That's still in the risk zone. 2E didn't have any goofy dice-rolling tricks for hit points. Your average 7th-level wizard has eighteen hit points, and negative hit points were an optional rule back then - it's conceivable that 2d10 damage could indeed kill him instantly.

(Heaven forfend if he has a low Constitution score - a 2E 7th-level wizard with lousy Constitution clocks in at an average of **11** hit points!)

JRM

09-24-2008 03:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9399459)

That's still in the risk zone. 2E didn't have any goofy dice-rolling tricks for hit points. Your average 7th-level wizard has eighteen hit points, and negative hit points were an optional rule back then - it's conceivable that 2d10 damage could indeed kill him instantly.

*(Heaven forfend if he has a low Constitution score - a 2E 7th-level wizard with lousy Constitution clocks in at an average of **11** hit points!)*

True enough, although I was concerned about whether 7th level was "low-level". My preference was for Low-Fantasy rather than Epic campaign, where 5th-8th level is a mid-level character and 9th+ is a high level mover and shaker. Plus, I did use the negative HP rule. I'd probably have made the Homunculus's master around 4th level.

But that's neither here nor there.

Getting back to the Homonculus, one thing I regret about these wizards servant type of monsters in D&D is that very few of them actually help the wizard use magic. There's only a few monsters that do that, such as the artificer-homunculus demiurge mentioned and the AD&D quasit or imp, which boosted their "master's" spell-casting by one level. It just seems unthematic to have most of a wizard's magical servants only act as thugs or spies.

noisms

09-24-2008 06:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9399813)

Getting back to the Homonculus, one thing I regret about these wizards servant type of monsters in D&D is that very few of them actually help the wizard use magic. There's only a few monsters that do that, such as the artificer-homunculus demiurge mentioned and the AD&D quasit or imp, which boosted their "master's" spell-casting by one

level. It just seems unthematic to have most of a wizard's magical servants only act as thugs or spies.

I only played it about three times, but didn't D&D 3.X have familiars for sorcerers who could store spells? I forget.

JRM

09-24-2008 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9402473)

I only played it about three times, but didn't D&D 3.X have familiars for sorcerers who could store spells? I forget.

I'm not a great 3rd edition expert but I think you are right about there being such a power in one of the supplement or Dragon articles. I have a vague memory it required a Feat for a relatively small benefit and the sorcerer/wizard had to be in contact with the familiar to cast the stored spell, so wasn't considered cost effective compared to a standard spell-storing item.

But as far as the core SRD goes the only boost a familiar gives its master's magic is that it can deliver touch spells and shares their personal protection spells.

EDIT: I guess I should explain it a bit more, I just like the flavour of a more traditional familiar - a little spirit-animal that can carry curses to inflict upon enemies; aids rituals; acts as an intermediary with supernatural forces; serves as a friend, spy, companion & advisor; boosts senses or concentration; crouches over experiments to keep them ticking while their master rests - or even take over running of a spell its master casts and "hands over" to it.

When running familiars and animal companions I like to give them a personality and useful functions to do. Many D&D familiars just seem a bit colourless, and there isn't much of an incentive for a mid- or high level caster to maintain one. If more of them were like a Homunculus, talking owl or something, then I think they'd be more interesting.

noisms

09-25-2008 12:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9403056)

EDIT: I guess I should explain it a bit more, I just like the flavour of a more traditional familiar - a little spirit-animal that can carry curses to inflict upon enemies; aids rituals; acts as an intermediary with supernatural forces; serves as a friend, spy, companion & advisor; boosts senses or concentration; crouches over experiments to keep them ticking while their master rests - or even take over running of a spell its master casts and "hands over" to it.

When running familiars and animal companions I like to give them a personality and useful functions to do. Many D&D familiars just seem a bit colourless, and there isn't much of an incentive for a mid- or high level caster to maintain one. If more of them were like a Homunculus, talking owl or something, then I think they'd be more

interesting.

As it stands they mostly just end up being "Cat which follows me around and gives me a bonus" which is much less interesting.

noisms

09-25-2008 01:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hook Horror

Hook Horrors! I have to admit I'd forgotten all about these, and gave a little chuckle of delight on discovering them lurking between the Homonculus and Horse entries, like how you run into an old friend between the canned goods and dairy product aisles in the supermarket who you haven't seen for years.

Hook Horrors come under that category of D&D creature that were patently created purely for use in dungeons, by DMs who needed something new for the next crawl as the players already knew the stats for everything else. (Other members of this nefarious gang include the gelatinous cube, lurker, cave fisher and cloaker.) They could never exist in anything other than a game of Dungeons and Dragons - because what possible place do "bipedal, underground-dwelling monster[s] that look like a cross between a vulture and a man with hooks instead of hands...stand[ing] about nine feet tall and weigh[ing] almost 350 pounds..." have in any ecosystem other than the entirely imaginary and thoroughly weird world of a random nerd's roughly scrawled gridmap?

The entry also sees the welcome return of speculation by sages, which is another plus. Although in this case "sages" are not cited explicitly, but merely hinted at: "It is thought that the hook horror is distantly related to the cockroach or cave cricket. " We know what the designers mean, though: those people doing the thinking are sages, baby.

Hook Horrors are a nice imaginative trip, whichever way you look at it. Vaguely humanoid, grossly oversized beetle things, as if from Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, but with hooks for hands (anyone who gets the Seinfeld reference wins a bonus point!) which they can dig into opponents, climb with, and which are presumably really good for nose-picking. To top it off they use echolocation like bats to find their way around, have compound eyes, and have a language which does not have words for indebtedness or gratitude. (Save a Hook Horror from death and it'll happily eat you straight away afterwards.)

Disappointingly though, Hook Horrors' exoskeletons cannot be used in my upcoming *Compendium of Monster Corpses and Things Wot You Can Do with Them*, because it becomes brittle after death and therefore no good for armour.

Five Eyes

09-25-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

This thread is fantastic.

And all you really have to do is magically preserve the hook horror or parts of its body. Keep it alive but handleless. Maybe give it prosthetic hooks? Or prosthetic hands, making a Hand Horror. Or strap two Crawling Claws to it.

For maximum second-string D&D monster nonsense, my current game has a Flind adversary using a flindbar made out of hook horror forearms. I think that's one weapon my party isn't going to try and salvage.

Two characters have ankheg hide armor and two use weapons made of the chitin of an unusual giant ant, however, so I think we're probably the key market for your sourcebook.

noisms

09-25-2008 02:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Berserk_Seraph (Post 9403677)
This thread is fantastic.

Thanks! I think when it's done I'll download it all and put it out there as a free .pdf to download. There are so many good ideas in it. (Almost none of them down to me.) It's like a DM's recipe book.

Quote:

And all you really have to do is magically preserve the hook horror or parts of its body. Keep it alive but handless. Maybe give it prosthetic hooks? Or prosthetic hands, making a Hand Horror. Or strap two Crawling Claws to it.

For maximum second-string D&D monster nonsense, my current game has a Flind adversary using a flindbar made out of hook horror forearms. I think that's one weapon my party isn't going to try and salvage.

Two characters have ankheg hide armor and two use weapons made of the chitin of an unusual giant ant, however, so I think we're probably the key market for your sourcebook.

Kudos for being the only person I know of to ever actually use ankheg hide armour.

g026r

09-25-2008 02:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9403489)
Disappointingly though, Hook Horrors' exoskeletons cannot be used in my upcoming Compendium of Monster Corpses and Things Wot You Can Do with Them, because it becomes brittle after death and therefore no good for armour.

They can go in the appendix -- "I Don't Think So, Pal" -- which lists those creatures that are *explicitly* described as not being useful post-killing.

kelvingreen

09-25-2008 03:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9403489)

because what possible place do "bipedal, underground-dwelling monster[s] that look like a cross between a vulture and a man with hooks instead of hands...stand[ing] about nine feet tall and weigh[ing] almost 350 pounds..." have in any ecosystem other than the entirely imaginary and thoroughly weird world of a random nerd's roughly scrawled gridmap?

I believe that particular nerd's name is Ian Livingstone. ;) The Hook Horror is one of the *White Dwarf* monsters that made it into the original *Fiend Folio*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9403754)

Kudos for being the only person I know of to ever actually use ankheg hide armour.

I had some in *Baldur's Gate*, but quickly sold it because it was nowhere near as good as all the enchanted stuff the game throws at you.

Five Eyes

09-25-2008 04:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9403754)

Kudos for being the only person I know of to ever actually use ankheg hide armour.

Well, it's in *Baldur's Gate*, so I suspect a lot of people have seen it in there.

I'm basically replacing "magic enhancement" with "superior materials or craftsmanship" for gear (3.5e reacts semi-poorly to party members without the appropriate level of mystic gear, AC and attack roll wise), so the ecology stuff in my much-beloved 2e MM (Also *my* first gaming book, I think there's a lot of that going on) is a big help in making unusual armor and weapon materials.

Wakboth

09-25-2008 04:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9398666)

They are one of the more nifty adaptations of movie monsters. One of the Sinbad (Golden Voyage?) films has a homonculus that looks identicle to that in the MM. When it was slain, the creator aged.

Yeah, I remember that. One of my favorite movies when I was a kid. :)

(Although IIRC, all the magic the bad guy did aged him... that was one of the reasons he was so keen to have perpetual youth from the magic fountain.)

6inTruder

09-25-2008 09:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9403056)

EDIT: I guess I should explain it a bit more, I just like the flavour of a more traditional familiar - a little spirit-animal that can carry curses to inflict upon enemies; aids rituals; acts as an intermediary with supernatural forces; serves as a friend, spy, companion & advisor; boosts senses or concentration; crouches over experiments to keep them ticking while their master rests - or even take over running of a spell its master casts and "hands over" to it.

When running familiars and animal companions I like to give them a personality and useful functions to do. Many D&D familiars just seem a bit colourless, and there isn't much of an incentive for a mid- or high level caster to maintain one. If more of them were like a Homunculus, talking owl or something, then I think they'd be more interesting.

Hey hey hey now! This is D&D, not one of those foofy games. Like Sorcerer.

:p

And thanks all for the variant Homonculus ideas. I've been steweing on a Dragonstar idea recently and I like remembering where magic and technology meet in trad D&D.

YojimboC

09-25-2008 01:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I had the hook horror toy as a small mammal. Y'know, along with Strongheart and Warduke and such.

noisms

09-25-2008 03:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9404037)

I believe that particular nerd's name is Ian Livingstone. ;) The Hook Horror is one of the White Dwarf monsters that made it into the original Fiend Folio.

Ian Livingstone, is there anything you *can't* do? ;)

Ragnarok_Engine

09-25-2008 04:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9405847)

I had the hook horror toy as a small mammal. Y'know, along with Strongheart and Warduke and such.

Yeah, until the note about Mr. Livingstone above, I had always assumed that the Hook Horror was created for the toy line first, and then added into the monster lineup later. Grells as well.

Mikaze

09-25-2008 05:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Another person here signing onto this forum because of this thread. That and the offhand chance of being able to tell the authors of the Wraeththu review that they're monsters forever for making me realize that game exists.

This thread has really brought back some memories.

noisms

09-25-2008 05:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 9406566)

Another person here signing onto this forum because of this thread. That and the offhand chance of being able to tell the authors of the Wraeththu review that they're monsters forever for making me realize that game exists.

This thread has really brought back some memories.

Welcome to our shared insanity. ;)

kelvingreen

09-26-2008 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ragnarok_Engine (Post 9406413)

Yeah, until the note about Mr. Livingstone above, I had always assumed that the Hook Horror was created for the toy line first, and then added into the monster lineup later. Grells as well.

Funny you should mention the Grell. That's one of his too! ;)

JRM

09-26-2008 06:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hook Horrors are yet another of those AD&D monsters I liked the idea of but never got around to using.

Now here's a puzzle, their 2nd edition write-up says, and I quote "The obvious penalty for having hooks instead of hands is that hook horrors cannot use weapons or tools. They can only pick up items in their beaks. This severely restricts their ability to amass large treasures." Why do they collect treasure? They can't use most magical or mundane equipment, and I don't see them doing much trading - they have poor relations with other races and other clans of hook horrors can't produce much in the way of trade goods because, well they ***don't have hands***.

About the only thing Hook Horrors seem to value going by their description is their clan-mates, shelter and food. I guess they could sell food to each other, but how would they preserve, store and transport it without hands?

Now, Hook Horrors could hoard treasure just as a status symbol or for religious/superstitious reasons (and to give player-character's a reason to kill them and take their stuff), but I prefer the idea that they keep treasure because they know the "handed ones" value it, so they can use it as bait in traps, payment for doing something vital they cannot perform themselves or ransoms to buy off attackers.

So, what adventures can revolve around these giant ungrateful hook-handed vulture-headed cockroach-men? Of course they can just be monsters that want to eat the PCs and whoever is hiring the party to get rid of them, but Hook Horrors are not actually Evil, more Amoral Neutral so could there be room for negotiation? Obviously, they'd need the *Comprehend Languages* spell or the assistance of a very specialized linguist to overcome the communication barrier.

Now I'm imagining a Tinker Gnome holding two peculiar contraptions, a 'clicker' in his left hand and a 'clacker' in his right. "Don't worry noble sirs, Mistress KlikKliklak here says they've only started to eat the Baron's cattle because they've been driven from their caverns by a strange monster. All we need do is slay the beast and they'll return underground. What's that good sirs? How much will they pay and what kind of beast is it? I'll just ask him. Klik Kliklik Klakliklak KlaKlak..."

Alternatively, in an underdark campaign a clan of Hook Horrors is preying on caravans along a newly opened trade-route and the PCs are sent to deal with it in whichever way they see fit - they could kill them all (which should be tough), drive them off with fearsome illusions, make a deal for "safe passage" - I'm not sure how smart they're supposed to be but I'd think that Hook Horrors could understand and observe a deal exchanging easy meals (a couple of hundred pounds of dried fungus and rothé pemmican) for tough ones (a pack-lizard or two snatched in a fight against tough guards).

My final adventure-seed idea is the clan matriarch has become gravely ill, and the Hook Horrors need to get a "handed one" healer to cast *Cure Disease* on her and are offering treasure valuable enough for it to be worth the risk. The PCs either bump into a Hook Horror seeking this service, or are hired by the healer as a bodyguard. They had better remember to get payment in advance, and present a strong enough "we're too tough to attack" appearance. These creatures don't comprehend indebtedness, remember.

noisms

09-26-2008 08:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9408946)

Now I'm imagining a Tinker Gnome holding two peculiar contraptions, a 'clicker' in his left hand and a 'clacker' in his right. "Don't worry noble sirs, Mistress KlikKliklak here says they've only started to eat the Baron's castle because they've been driven from their caverns by a strange monster. All we need do is slay the beast and they'll return underground. What's that good sirs? How much will they pay and what kind of beast is it? I'll just ask him. Klik Kliklik Klakliklak KlaKlak..."

This is getting yonked!

noisms

09-26-2008 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Horse

Ah, Horsey Horsey. Mighty steed of shining warriors, snackstuff of griffins, perforator of deranged Seattle zoophiles' colons. If you don't know what a horse is, here is a description penned by a nameless TSR person:

Quote:

Horses are large quadrupeds often used for transportation, or as pack and draft animals, by human and demihuman races. They are frequently bred for their speed and for their beauty.

A horse can be solid white, gray, chestnut, brown, black, or various reddish tones; its hide can instead show a variation or combination of these colors. Some of the more interesting variations include the piebald, which has a coat of large, irregular patches of black and white; the palomino, with its rich yellow-gold coat and white mane and tail; and the dapple gray, which is dark gray with flecks of lighter color on the chest, belly, and hindquarters.

In addition to the coat's color, the horse may have markings of various sorts. The long hairs of the mane and tail can be lighter, darker, or of the same color as the body of the horse. Possible markings include socks (meaning the leg from the hoof, halfway to the knee, or hock, is white); a white muzzle; a blaze (a wide band of white from the top of the horse's head to the tip of its nose); and a star (a white, diamond-shaped patch set on the horse's forehead, right between its eyes).

Horses are measured in "hands." One hand equals 4 inches.

Not a bad precis as those things go, but as usual I find myself scratching my head and wondering why they bothered. A sense of completeness, maybe.

Anyway, there's a whole heap of guff to do with loads, speeds and encumbrance rates that we really don't need to go into. The most interesting point of note in the main entry is that loud noises, fires and whatnot panic horses 90% of the time; this is something I almost never use in games but I really think I should. Horse rustling goblin bandits attacking in the night, making loud noises to scare off the party's steeds.

A few types of horses are detailed:

Draft Horses - big buggers who pull stuff.

War Horses - coming in three varieties (heavy, medium, light) and able to fight.

Pony - you know what these are.

Wild Horse - is what it says.

Riding Horse - is also what it says.

Mule - is *also* what it says. "Their price depends upon how much grief they have given their current owners." I like that.

Steppe Pony - you wouldn't have thought this one gets the most detail, but it does. It's like a cross between a wild horse and a war horse, except tougher and hardier. It isn't truly appreciated outside of its steppland home, and so is usually a good bargain for an adventurer with a good eye who knows his horses.

JRM

09-27-2008 12:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9411328)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9408946)

Now I'm imagining a Tinker Gnome holding two peculiar contraptions, a 'clicker' in his left hand and a 'clacker' in his right. "Don't worry noble sirs, Mistress KlikKliklak here says they've only started to eat the Baron's castle because they've been driven from their caverns by a strange monster. All we need do is slay the beast and they'll return underground. What's that good sirs? How much will they pay and what kind of beast is it? I'll just ask hir Klik Kliklik Klakliklak KlaKlak..."

This is getting yoinked!

Yoink away my good sir. I wouldn't have posted it if I wasn't willing to share.:)

Hold on, "the Baron's **castle**" What the blazes? I'm sure I typed "the Baron's **cattle**".

Glances back at earlier post ... castle! ... Edit ~~castle~~ cattle ...

See, I told you I said cattle.:cool:;)

JRM

09-27-2008 01:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9411384)

Horse

snip

Not a bad precis as those things go, but as usual I find myself scratching my head and wondering why they bothered. A sense of completeness, maybe.

Anyway, there's a whole heap of guff to do with loads, speeds and encumbrance rates that we really don't need to go into. The most interesting point of note in the main entry is that loud noises, fires and whatnot panic horses 90% of the time; this is something I almost never use in games but I really think I should. Horse rustling goblin bandits attacking in the night, making loud noises to scare off the party's steeds.

Yes, I was a bit at a loss for something interesting to say about the Monstrous Compendium's horse entry too. The 'easily spooked unless specially trained' is the one that turned up most often in my games - that's why PCs want trained warhorses, and why they're so expensive.

But then I saw something I'd completely forgotten about:

A horse can also move at speeds higher than those given as their base movement rates, as shown on the table below. The horse's normal movement rate is considered a trot.

Type	Walk	Trot	Canter	Gallop
Draft	6	12	18	24
Heavy	6	15	21	27
Medium	9	18	27	36
Light	12	24	36	48
Pony	6	12	18	24
Wild	12	24	36	48
Riding	12	24	36	48
Mule	6	12	18	24

What?! Most horses can double their movement speed by just *running faster*. Don't these people know practically every living species of quadrupedal mammal goes through these gaits? Why make this special rule for horses alone, it's not like they have a unique "turbo-speed" ability like Cheetah's *Sprinting* or Giant Squid's *Jet* move. That means the faster horses can run as fast or faster than any of the animals in the 'Bird' entry. They outpace Falcons and Large Hawks!

Dearie, dearie me.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9411384)
Steppe Pony - you wouldn't have thought this one gets the most detail, but it does. It's like a cross between a wild horse and a war horse, except tougher and hardier. It isn't truly appreciated outside of its steppland home, and so is usually a good bargain for an adventurer with a good eye who knows his horses.

Why would any adventurer think of buying a light warhorse when a steppe pony is equal or better in all respects - and cheaper too boot, if I remember my Player's Handbook. At least make the breed hard to obtain or more expensive, so that PCs have a reason to buy light warhorses beyond "Steppe Ponies are ugly and unfashionable".

Five Eyes

09-27-2008 01:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Yoink away my good sir. I wouldn't have posted it if I wasn't willing to share.

Hold on, "the Baron's castle" What the blazes? I'm sure I typed "the Baron's cattle".

I had just assumed that their inability to make sandwiches made them *extremely* hungry.

Littleredfox

09-27-2008 01:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9404037)

I had some in Baldur's Gate, but quickly sold it because it was nowhere near as good as all the enchanted stuff the game throws at you.

Tis the Best Armour for Druids IIRC. [All the better enchanted armour is metal] So Jaheria likes it.

Also often the Best Armour for PC Paladins [Who's STR is often not that great due to the other stat requirements and need its low weight to have some carrying capacity left]

demiurge1138

09-27-2008 02:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I like that the horse entry has things like names of color patterns and what "hands" mean. It lets the GM talk about horses the PCs encounter or buy like he knows what he's talking about.

JRM

09-27-2008 03:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Berserk_Seraph (Post 9412018)

*I had just assumed that their inability to make sandwiches made them *extremely* hungry.*

Actually what happened was the tinker-gnome thought they said "kliK-Laklak Klikkliklak" ("strong-skinned lair") when in fact they said "kliKlaklak KlikKliklak" ("meat beasts"). That's my new story, and I'm sticking to it...

...until I can think of a better one.:p

Failed Saving Throw

09-27-2008 04:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The Savage Tide adventure path actually brings back a whole host of old-school D&D classics. In the first adventure, the PCs get trapped in a series of tunnels beneath a small island, and have to fight off waves of zombies. The lead baddie is a huecuva - and you even find the corpse of a guy who barricaded himself into a room before succumbing to the huecuva's wasting effect.

There's also a cool part where the PCs stumble onto a hidden village of mongrelfolk deep in the Underdark that is guarded by six hook horrors. That definitely provoked cheers of delight when that encounter began. (My PCs resolved it without a fight.)

E.T.Smith

09-27-2008 02:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9403489)

Hook Horror

Incidentally, one of the handful of D&D beasts that warranted inclusion in the early 1980's *Dungeons & Dragons* line of action figures. I did a double-take when I first came across one of these at a yard sale and recognized it from the Fiend Folio:

http://www.geocities.com/lpittack/dnd/Hook_Horror.jpg

JRM

09-27-2008 06:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9414920)

Incidentally, one of the handful of D&D beasts that warranted inclusion in the early 1980's Dungeons & Dragons line of action figures. I did a double-take when I first came across one of these at a yard sale and recognized it from the Fiend Folio:

Look at that washboard stomach! Who is this, the Muscle Beach Hook Horror?

While he's quite different from the 2nd edition look, that's actually closer to the original Fiend Folio's illustration than the Monstrous Compendium's hook-handed cockroach guy:

<http://www.dotd.com/mm/hookhorr.gif>

Crinos

09-28-2008 05:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9414920)

Incidentally, one of the handful of D&D beasts that warranted inclusion in the early 1980's Dungeons & Dragons line of action figures. I did a double-take when I first came across one of these at a yard sale and recognized it from the Fiend Folio:

http://www.geocities.com/lpittack/dnd/Hook_Horror.jpg

Are you sure that the Hook Horror wasn't one of those monsters that were inspired by a plastic toy? Like the Bullete allegedly was?

Neurotrash

09-28-2008 06:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

No, I had this one too. It was an official D&D toy.

I also had the rubber Chimera and Grell, and the Fire Elemental.

I wish I still had them...they might be somewhere in my parents' attic.

E.T.Smith

09-28-2008 06:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Neurotrash (Post 9416598)

No, I had this one too. It was an official D&D toy.

Yup. [Here's a site](#) with information on all the toys, including the Hook Horror. Its kind of surreal that a modestly popular kids' toy series based on AD&D came out during the 1st edition days, when the actual game was still all about assassins, grisly death and naked succubi.

<http://www.toyarchive.com/Dungeons&D...dukeMOSC1a.jpg>

g026r

09-28-2008 07:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9416684)

Its kind of surreal that a modestly popular kids' toy series based on AD&D came out during the 1st edition days, when the actual game was still all about assassins, grisly death and naked succubi.

The amusing thing is that the game inspired the toys, which in turn inspired a module: [XL-1: Quest for the Heartstone](#)

sim_james

09-28-2008 12:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9416684)

<http://www.toyarchive.com/Dungeons&D...dukeMOSC1a.jpg>

Warduke's armour never looked more uncomfortable.

Kakita Kojiro

09-28-2008 12:31 PM

Warduke! Good grief, this thread is giving me nostalgia overload.

noisms

09-28-2008 01:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I never even *knew* there were AD&D action figures. To think I spent my childhood years collecting *Star Wars* toys.

demiurge1138

09-28-2008 03:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9417541)

Warduke! Good grief, this thread is giving me nostalgia overload.

I love Warduke. I slipped him into the Age of Worms D&D 3.5 game I ran... he killed the same character twice in one round. Then walked through a blade barrier unharmed.

Wakboth

09-28-2008 05:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by g026r (Post 9416728)

The amusing thing is that the game inspired the toys, which in turn inspired a module: XL-1: Quest for the Heartston

Damn, I'd forgotten all about that adventure! IIRC, it had some nice isometric maps, but was otherwise pretty forgettable.

JRM

09-28-2008 06:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9416509)

Are you sure that the Hook Horror wasn't one of those monsters that were inspired by a plastic toy? Like the Bullete allegedly was?

It's all part of the cycle of existence, Crinos.

... plastic toy inspires AD&D monster ... AD&D monster inspires plastic toy ...

The great wheel never stops turning.:cool:

MadWritter

09-28-2008 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9418112)

It's all part of the cycle of existence, Crinos.

... plastic toy inspires AD&D monster ... AD&D monster inspires plastic toy ...

The great wheel never stops turning.:cool:

That quote make me smiled--nice job.

David J Prokopetz

09-29-2008 01:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9417829)

I love Warduke. I slipped him into the Age of Worms D&D 3.5 game I ran... he killed the same character twice in one round.

I'd like to hear that story.

E.T.Smith

09-29-2008 01:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9417829)

I love Warduke. I slipped him into the Age of Worms D&D 3.5 game I ran... he killed the same character twice in one round. Then walked through a blade barrier unharmed.

You're not the only one. He's even recently reappeared in official supplements several times, including as a [D&D miniature](#) and on the cover of [Dungeon #105](#).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9417633)

I never even knew there were AD&D action figures. To think I spent my childhood years collecting Star Wars toys.

There was a lot of amusing licensed knick knacks that resulted from D&D's time as a full-blown 80's fad. [This blog](#) shows some of them, including puzzles, coloring books and even a colorforms set.

demiurge1138

09-29-2008 03:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9418659)

I'd like to hear that story.

High-level, high-resource 3.5 D&D lets PCs do some silly things, like hand out *revivify* spells (a no-level-cost

raise dead if cast within 1 round of death) like candy at Halloween and follow them up with a quickened cure spell chaser. Unfortunately, the poor recently murdalized character made the decision to stand up. Attack of opportunity from Warduke, rolled a 20, got her again.

Sleeper

09-29-2008 03:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9415313)

Look at that washboard stomach! Who is this, the Muscle Beach Hook Horror?

Might as well work on his abs. Without an opposable hook, weightlifting is out of the question.

noisms

09-29-2008 12:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Human

So here we are. Us. Homus Sapiens, in all our (questionable) glory.

There are bloody loads of varieties of 'human', though what is notable about them is how weak they are. Almost all are 0-level, and even knights have only 2 HD. Funny how power creep works; I didn't play a great deal of 3.x and haven't played any 4e, but something tells me human soldiers in those games generally don't have 1-6 hit points.

Anyway:

Aborigine/Caveman: I'm not sure if this category would fly these days, especially in the Antipodes!

Aborigine/Caveman. Hmm...

Adventurer: Rival adventuring parties are a huge favourite of mine, and always guaranteed an appearance - preferably in the form of a race towards a prize. Like in the Flaming Lips song.

Bandits/Brigands: Not much to say about these, although I like how the designers made the 'Brigand' a kind of souped-up version of the Bandit; I bet the Bandits were well pissed off about that.

Berzerker/Dervish: A strange confluence of Scandinavian and Arabic cultures in this entry.

Farmer/Herder, Gentry, Knight: You know what these three categories are. The possibility (5%) of meeting a vanquished knight intrigues me; there's no way of having a vanquished knight appear in a campaign without him developing into a hook.

Mercenary: These actually have levels, usually.

Merchant Sailor/Fisherman: These are often armed with belaying pins, which do 1 point of damage. Why bother? A punch does more than that.

Merchant/Trader: Rules are set out here for generating trading caravans, which are presumably ripe targets for Bandits - or even the mighty Brigands.

Middle Class: The most boring type of human.

Peasant/Serf: The most pitiful type of human.

Pilgrim: Bands of pilgrims are sometimes accompanied by special religious artifacts, which also presumably need protecting from thieves. Or stealing.

Pirate/Buccaneer: We can put to bed forever the question of what the difference between a Pirate and a Buccaneer is: Buccaneers are neutral with evil tendencies; Pirates are just any evil. *Nods sagely*

Police/Constabulary: I like that these are often accompanied by a lynch mob of peasant cronies.

Priests: Wandering religious folks.

Sailor: The good version of pirates.

Slaver: Another nice little adventure hook is the old 'track down family members kidnapped by slavers' routine. One of my longest campaigns as a player started off with that very storyline, in fact.

Soldier: Less detail than one would expect, given how keen the designers of AD&D were on medieval military formations. Then again, we have the 2nd edition DMG for that sort of thing.

Thief/Thug: Unlike the Brigand/Bandit or Pirate/Buccaneer axes, there is no clear distinction between thieves and thugs.

Tradesfolk/Craftspeople: 1% of these are retired adventurers; so watch out that the poor weaver you're bullying doesn't end up being a 20th level wizard doing a few odd-jobs to tide him over in his old age.

Tribal Culture: These don't get the bad press which aborigines do, in that they aren't categorised with cavemen.

Wizards: Random encounter wizards are a strange thing that I haven't ever used. Could be fun, though. I mean, wizards do have to travel sometimes, right?

David J Prokopetz

09-29-2008 01:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9420205)

Human

So here we are. Us. Homus Sapiens, in all our (questionable) glory.

The thing that got me about this entry is that the illustration of the iconic human appears to be a cave man. Why a cave man?

Wakboth

09-29-2008 05:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9420252)

The thing that got me about this entry is that the illustration of the iconic human appears to be a cave man. Why a cave man?

Aren't there also a hawt pirate lady and an axe-wielding viking type, there?

As for the HP inflation of soldier / guard types, that's to make it a bit less easy for a single bored and/or sociopathic player to rampage through a city killing everything in their path... :)

noisms

09-29-2008 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9420719)

Aren't there also a hawt pirate lady and an axe-wielding viking type, there?

As for the HP inflation of soldier / guard types, that's to make it a bit less easy for a single bored and/or sociopathic player to rampage through a city killing everything in their path... :)

There's also a hideous caricature of an Arab.

Isn't it worrying that there should have to be HP inflation just to prevent players acting like sociopaths? Sometimes I really wonder about this hobby. ;)

Kakita Kojiro

09-30-2008 03:26 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9420205)

Merchant Sailor/Fisherman: These are often armed with belaying pins, which do 1 point of damage. Why bother? A punch does more than that.

Wonder what kind of itty-bitty belaying pin someone thought was being used? They should be equivalent to a club or sap, at the least.

Are the *Sailors* better armed than the *Merchant Sailors*?

Also: linking dervishes to berserkers is enough of a hideous caricature even without bad art, methinks.

Hellzon

09-30-2008 03:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9420205)

Funny how power creep works; I didn't play a great deal of 3.x and haven't played any 4e, but something tells me human soldiers in those games generally don't have 1-6 hit points.

"Human Rabble" have 1 HP in 4e. But they're minions, so that's cheating. :p

The non-minions range from 37 to 66.

YojimboC

09-30-2008 06:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9417829)

I love Warduke. I slipped him into the Age of Worms D&D 3.5 game I ran... he killed the same character twice in one round. Then walked through a blade barrier unharmed.

I've used Warduke myself in 3.0. He kicked a lot of ass and got to be all brooding an evil. The players were very afraid of him -- it was great.

JRM

09-30-2008 06:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9420205)

Human

So here we are. Us. Homus Sapiens, in all our (questionable) glory.

There are bloody loads of varieties of 'human', though what is notable about them is how weak they are. Almost all are 0-level, and even knights have only 2 HD. Funny how power creep works; I didn't play a great deal of 3.x and haven't played any 4e, but something tells me human soldiers in those games generally don't have 1-6 hit points.

Knights are 2+ HD, not only 2 HD. They are all fighters of 2nd level and above who use the Adventurer level/magic-item tables.

At first sight it's a really dull set of entries, although closer examination a lot of weird little details...

Human's may be weak but look at those treasure types, most of them are not worth the trouble of killing to take their stuff. Best to target those humans with treasure type Q like Bandits, Pirates and Thugs and hope your DM rolls high on the gems table. Thieves/Thugs have the best reward to risk ratio, since they have a fair chance of having magical items. But steer clear of the adventurers, you never know what level they will turn out to be. ;)

Why have Aborigines and Tribesmen have separate entries when their stats are identical? The only real differences are the former use stone weapons, live in caves and have fewer and weaker shaman. Surely Cavemen/Neanderthals would have been better off with an entry for themselves?

There's something intriguing about the notion of Dervishes as LG Berserker-equivalents although I've never made anything of it. Why play a goody two-shoes Paladin when you could be a mild-mannered pilgrim who transforms into a frenzied, scimitar twirling nomad that kicks arse for the Lord?

Notice how the odds are stacked in the favour of Pirates in encounters with their Navy equivalent, the Sailors. From the encounter averages, the pirates outnumber the sailors almost four too one (30d10 vs 4d20 = 165 vs 42) and have more and higher level fighters leading them, plus the pirates sometimes have a wizard or cleric as magical support. Not to mention they have more loot! The supposed fighting Sailors are little better than Merchant Sailors or Fishermen.

No wonder my PCs would rather become Buccaneers....:cool:

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9420719)

As for the HP inflation of soldier / guard types, that's to make it a bit less easy for a single bored and/or sociopathic player to rampage through a city killing everything in their path... :)

Been there, had a player who did that. Multiple times.:o

noisms

09-30-2008 10:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hydra

A nice little mythological Greek monster to round out the 'H's. We're almost half way through, I think, if not just past half way. I'm too lazy to count.

Anyway, you all know what Hydras are. What interests me about the entry is how the designers try to come up with at least a pseudo-scientific justification for how decapitation of a head doesn't result in a speedy death - apparently the blood vessels in the hyrda's neck immediately snap shut to stem the bleeding. I mean, come on. This is D&D. Nobody bothers coming up with a scientific explanation for how a medusa turns people to stone. Why bother?

There are a few types of Hydra:

Lernean Hydra - I'm not sure if I'm hallucinating this, so I'll write the blurb out in full with the apparently hallucinatory part in bold: "Although similar to a normal hydra, Lernaean hydrae will regenerate two heads for each one that is severed. A maximum of 12 heads can be grown. New heads form in 1-4 rounds and can be avoided only by the prompt application of flame to the neck following the attack which destroyed the first head. **This hydra's body is immune to all attacks.**" If I'm not dreaming it... how is it that I've never used one of these before!?!?

Pyrohydra: A hydra which breathes flame. I can't remember if this was the one in Harryhausen's Jason and the Argonauts... it must be at least 15 years since I've seen it.

Cryohydra: Similar to the Pyrohydra, except it breathes cold.

I find it strange that the Pyrohydra and Cryohydra only do 8 points of damage with their breath attacks. I know that they shouldn't be as powerful as dragons, but still, it does seem rather measly. Indeed Hydras aren't nearly as fearsome as I would imagine one to be - I would rather have them as the big bad bodyguard of the big bad boss in a mid-level campaign, but I think a mid-level party could put one away rather easily.

Kapten

10-01-2008 12:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9425151)

Hydra

I find it strange that the Pyrohydra and Cryohydra only do 8 points of damage with their breath attacks. I know that they shouldn't be as powerful as dragons, but still, it does seem rather measly. Indeed Hydras aren't nearly as fearsome as I would imagine one to be - I would rather have them as the big bad bodyguard of the big bad boss in a mid-level campaign, but I think a mid-level party could put one away rather easily.

I have always interpreted it as 8 points of damage per head, meaning a damage from 40 to 96. That would make more sense considering the HD and Exp-value of the hydras.

noisms

10-01-2008 12:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9424787)

Why have Aborigines and Tribesmen have separate entries when their stats are identical? The only real differences are the former use stone weapons, live in caves and have fewer and weaker shaman. Surely Cavemen/Neanderthals would have been better off with an entry for themselves?

It find it odd too. I'm not one to be offended at this sort of thing in RPGs usually, but it really does strike me as palpably wrong to lump aborigines in with 'cavemen' - with all the baggage that term brings with it. But enough politics!

Sleeper

10-01-2008 01:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9425650)

It find it odd too. I'm not one to be offended at this sort of thing in RPGs usually, but it really does strike me as palpably wrong to lump aborigines in with 'cavemen' - with all the baggage that term brings with it. But enough politics!

I think they were trying in their clumsy way to be sensitive. In the original MM, tribesmen were lumped in with cavemen, so apparently they added aborigines so they could separate the tribal culture out. Which of course created a new problem. Merging berserkers and dervishes also seems a bit weird since dervishes used to be lumped in with nomads and berserkers were their own subentry.

JRM

10-01-2008 01:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9425151)

Hydra

A nice little mythological Greek monster to round out the 'H's. We're almost half way through, I think, if not just past half way. I'm too lazy to count.

Anyway, you all know what Hydras are. What interests me about the entry is how the designers try to come up with at least a pseudo-scientific justification for how decapitation of a head doesn't result in a speedy death - apparently the blood vessels in the hyrda's neck immediately snap shut to stem the bleeding. I mean, come on. This is D&D. Nobody bothers coming up with a scientific explanation for how a medusa turns people to stone. Why bother?

There are a few types of Hydra:

*Lernean Hydra - I'm not sure if I'm hallucinating this, so I'll write the blurb out in full with the apparently hallucinatory part in bold: "Although similar to a normal hydra, Lernaean hydrae will regenerate two heads for each one that is severed. A maximum of 12 heads can be grown. New heads form in 1-4 rounds and can be avoided only by the prompt application of flame to the neck following the attack which destroyed the first head. **This hydra's body is immune to all attacks.**" If I'm not dreaming it... how is it that I've never used one of these before!?!?*

This bothers you, but you let the regular Hydra's "Attacks on the body have no effect unless a single attack inflicts damage equal to the hydra's original hit points" pass without comment? That's saying the Hydra is immune to all attacks to its body that don't kill it in a single attack.

Now I wonder how long it will be before someone starts arguing over whether the plural of Hydra should be Hydrae or Hydras?:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9425151)

Pyrohydra: A hydra which breathes flame. I can't remember if this was the one in Harryhausen's Jason and the Argonauts... it must be at least 15 years since I've seen it.

Nope, the Jason and the Argonauts movie's Hydra was a regular seven-headed, non-regenerating beast. Unlike the AD&D version it didn't have any legs, but made up for this deficit by having two prehensile tails.

There is a fire-breathing Hydra in the 1963 movie **Captain Sindbad** though, a film for which I have a soft spot - bits of it somehow manage to be awesome, awful and hilarious at the same time.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9425151)

I find it strange that the Pyrohydra and Cryohydra only do 8 points of damage with their breath attacks. I know that they shouldn't be as powerful as dragons, but still, it does seem rather measly. Indeed Hydras aren't nearly as fearsome as I would imagine one to be - I would rather have them as the big bad bodyguard of the big bad boss in a mid-level campaign, but I think a mid-level party could put one away rather easily.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9425589)

I have always interpreted it as 8 points of damage per head, meaning a damage from 40 to 96. That would make more sense considering the HD and Exp-value of the hydras.

Each head has its own breath weapon, so if they all breathe on the same victim it can do a respectable amount of damage. The Pyrohydra is hampered by the pathetic 5' range to which it can spit flame - a PC can outreach that with a spear!

Oh, and before I forget, the 2nd edition AD&D Hydra had a nice "Ecology of the Hydra" write up by Jonathan Richards in **Dragon #272**. My favourite idea from it was that a Hydra, being a swamp and marsh monster, spent a lot of time hiding underwater waiting for passing prey while leaving only one of its heads on the surface as a look-out cum snorkel. I like to imagine a party of adventurers saying "look over there, a snake's head coming towards us ... we can handle it, it's just a Giant Constrictor Snake ... hey there's a bunch more of them, it must be a nest of snakes" and then the monster's dragon-body claws onto shore and someone screams "Aieeee a Hydra!" in their best Legolas impersonation.

By the way, is it evil of me to want AD&D Hydra to have deadly venomous fangs & blood like their mythological inspiration?

Failed Saving Throw

10-01-2008 06:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9416509)

Are you sure that the Hook Horror wasn't one of those monsters that were inspired by a plastic toy? Like the Bullete allegedly was?

I actually had that plastic bulette toy that inspired Gygax. It was a pretty common thing dispensed on boardwalk toy-machines.

Crinos

10-01-2008 08:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

The Learnian Hydra is actually the way the Hydra in the original myth worked: to kill it Hercules had to burn each neck stump as he clubbed them off (and in some versions the final head is immortal, so Hercules has to trap it under a rock).

As to why attacking the body doesn't work, I suppose it was to make it so the heroes had to cut off the heads, since that's how it was done in the myth (why Hercules didn't bother attacking the body is beyond me).

Azimer the Mad

10-01-2008 10:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9425796)

*Oh, and before I forget, the 2nd edition AD&D Hydra had a nice "Ecology of the Hydra" write up by Jonathan Richara in **Dragon #272**.*

Yeah, that was the one where it was revealed that farmers hang hydra tongues from roofs because they turn blue when it rained. I loved stuff like that.

Kakita Kojiro

10-01-2008 11:58 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9425796)

Now I wonder how long it will be before someone starts arguing over whether the plural of Hydra should be Hydrae or Hydras?:D

My peeve says: "hydrai" if you're Greek or Roman, "hydras" if you're an English type, and just "ninja" if you're into anime. Latin uses Greek declension for Greek nouns, so never "hydrae".

Um, unless you're talking about stars, when "hydrae" is adjectival, anyway.

noisms

10-01-2008 05:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Azimer the Mad (Post 9427218)

Yeah, that was the one where it was revealed that farmers hang hydra tongues from roofs because they turn blue when it rained. I loved stuff like that.

Those must be some bloody tough farmers!

Wakboth

10-01-2008 05:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Hydras have always been a bit "duh" monster, IMO. They're not iconic like dragons, and are essentially Big Dumb Beasties, with a weird HP system.

(un)reason

10-01-2008 06:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9425589)

I have always interpreted it as 8 points of damage per head, meaning a damage from 40 to 96. That would make more sense considering the HD and Exp-value of the hydras.

This is one of those weird bits of evolutionary logic where each step makes sense, but when you look at the end result, you go, how the hell does that work. It goes roughly.

1: Dragons in OD&D do an amount of damage equal to their hit points with their breath weapon.

2: Hydras are sorta like dragons, so they should do the same.

3: If every head could do that much, then players would die instantly. So since each head is a hit die, each head should inflict 8 points of damage. That way, if all of them breathe on one opponent at once, they'll do an amount of damage equal to the hydras starting hit points.

4: DM doesn't realise that, players go WTF when individual heads breathe separately, and only do piddling amounts of damage.

5: Profit! :D

JRM

10-01-2008 07:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9427529)

My peeve says: "hydrai" if you're Greek or Roman, "hydras" if you're an English type, and just "ninja" if you're into

anime. Latin uses Greek declension for Greek nouns, so never "hydrae".

Um, unless you're talking about stars, when "hydrae" is adjectival, anyway.

Mwah hah hah! I suspected someone would fall into my insidious Hydra-trap. Now let's see how Kakita Kojiro copes with my venomous fifty-headed regenerating Hydrai.

:D

Normally I'd use Hydras for the plural, more because Hydrae sounds clumsy to me than because it's an incorrect declension, but since the Monstrous Compendium used Hydrae I decided to leave it in.

Incidentally, I believe Hydrae is sometimes used for multiples of the freshwater polyp **Hydra**, since the convention for taxonomic names always seem to use Latin endings regardless of the words' origins - e.g. they're of the family Hydridae.

Now why didn't I remember the real-life Hydra earlier? It has some obvious parallels to the fantasy monster Hydra, and could be the basis of a cool monster itself once enlarged to giant size: Five to twelve tentacles with paralyzing stings, able to swallow victims over twice its size, immune to aging and possessing amazing regenerative powers - it can even reform after being pushed through a mesh to separate it into individual cells.

sim_james

10-01-2008 08:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9420205)

Aborigine/Caveman: I'm not sure if this category would fly these days, especially in the Antipodes!

Aborigine/Caveman. Hmm...

It would be more accurate to use the *Tribal Culture* type for pre-invasion Australian Aborigines, imo.

Boris

10-01-2008 09:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9428277)

Those must be some bloody tough farmers!

They got lots of XP killing Ankhegs and now they can wear Ankheg shell armour while they fight the Hydra.
Duh.

David J Prokopetz

10-01-2008 11:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9428522)

Normally I'd use Hydras for the plural, more because Hydrae sounds clumsy to me than because it's an incorrect declension, but since the Monstrous Compendium used Hydrae I decided to leave it in.

I'm suddenly half-tempted to exploit the "Latin plurals are weird" meme to try to convince folks that the proper plural of "hydra" is "hydrangea".

JRM

10-01-2008 11:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9428983)

I'm suddenly half-tempted to exploit the "Latin plurals are weird" meme to try to convince folks that the proper plural of "hydra" is "hydrangea".

Shouldn't that be "hydrangai", since Hydra is Greek?:p;)

David J Prokopetz

10-02-2008 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9429095)

Shouldn't that be "hydrangai", since Hydra is Greek?:p;)

All plurals are Latin plurals in RPG-land.

demiurge1138

10-02-2008 02:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9428277)
Those must be some bloody tough farmers!

Nah, they just know how greedy adventurer-types are. If a farming community is willing to scrape together 100 gold between them to hire adventurers to kill the hydra that's been eating their sheep, cows and occasional farmhand, they'll pitch in an extra 5 or 10 gold to get the hydra's tongues, too.

And it's not as if they couldn't hang onto those tongues. Dry them out to use as a barometer. Maybe even pass them down, from generation to generation. And as the hydra tongues become beloved family heirlooms, they might start to pick up a little more magic from the farmers believing they should. Nothing flashy, mind you, but maybe Old Man Smith's hydra tongue turns one color when it's time to plant and another when it's time to harvest. Maybe the Magnussons, good salt-of-the-earth folk, have a hydra tongue that, when you soak it in water, turns that water into a potion that cures livestock of disease, or makes their corn grow just a little bit higher. That sort of thing.

Kakita Kojiro

10-02-2008 02:41 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9428522)
*Incidentally, I believe Hydrae is sometimes used for multiples of the freshwater polyp **Hydra**, since the convention for taxonomic names always seem to use Latin endings regardless of the words' origins - e.g. they're of the family Hydridae.*

You cannot so easily outwit my peeve! The family Hydridae uses Latin declension because it is a Latin suffix welded onto a Greek stem, which is perfectly acceptable Latin usage. The *genus* Hydra is pluralized hydras in the very wiki article you cite. ha!

... interesting, some hydrozoa metamorphose into medusas. Wasn't the Lernean hydra was one of the critters that sprung out of Medusa's lifesblood when she was beheaded? Oop, no; it was spawned by Typhon + Echidna. Still, would be an interestingly whacky D&D fantasy biology -- hydras are baby medusas.

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9429153)
All plurals are Latin plurals in RPG-land.

Unfortunately, Latin plurals in RPG-land are usually of the form "just stick an -i on the end". *shudder*

Dragonlance was particularly bad about this.

JRM

10-02-2008 05:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9429728)

You cannot so easily outwit my peeve! The family Hydridae uses Latin declension because it is a Latin suffix welded onto a Greek stem, which is perfectly acceptable Latin usage. The genus Hydra is pluralized hydras in the very wiki article you cite. ha!

Bah! I am not foiled so easily, for the -ae suffix can also apply to the genus name *Hydra*, the plural of which can be *Hydrae* as well as *Hydras*, of which you can easily find examples in scientific papers such as [this abstract](#).

Now, I wonder what a hardcopy English dictionary will have to say on the matter ... hmm, neither my compact Chambers or Oxford give a plural for the animal, no help there.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9429728)

... interesting, some hydrozoa metamorphose into medeusas. Wasn't the Lernean hydra was one of the critters that sprung out of Medusa's lifeblood when she was beheaded? Oop, no; it was spawned by Typhon + Echidna. Still, would be an interestingly whacky D&D fantasy biology -- hydras are baby medeusas.

Where's this "medeusas" come from? Isn't the original Greek Medousa, which I guess would make the plural Medousai.

Hydrae (:) are not among the hydrozoa that morph into medusae (:) - they remain polyps throughout their lives. Yes, I did just type hydrae and medusae just to tease Kakita Kojiro (:p).

Anyhow, having hydras be larval medusas would be interesting. Of course, hydras are a lot bigger - but then they could be like the frog *Pseudis paradoxa* and have a tadpole much larger than the adult. If an adult medusa has wings like in the Greek myth they can fly from swamp to swamp to lay eggs which hatch into new hydras. I'd want to tinker with the medusa's stats and appearance though, since I don't think having a hydra larval form fits with them being snaky-haired babes with above human average intelligence as they are in the [Monstrous Compendium](#).

The Last Conformist

10-02-2008 09:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9429728)

You cannot so easily outwit my peeve! The family Hydridae uses Latin declension because it is a Latin suffix welded onto a Greek stem, which is perfectly acceptable Latin usage.

No. It uses pseudo-Latin declension on a Greek stem with a Greek suffix because taxonomic Latinists are a bunch of inconsistent bastards.

The Latin plural of hydra would be *hydrae*, because the word was treated as a regular Latin first declination noun, not unassimilated Greek. ([dictionary entry](#))

Wakboth

10-02-2008 09:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

You know, I think we got more mileage out of the various bogus plurals of "hydra" than the entire "Human" section. :)

David J Prokopetz

10-02-2008 11:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9429728)

*Unfortunately, Latin plurals in RPG-land are usually of the form "just stick an -i on the end". *shudder**

Cactus - Cacti
Walrus - Walri
Penis - Penii
Bus - ... Bi?

:D

(For bonus points, tell me which one of the above is actually valid.)

Kreuzritter

10-03-2008 01:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

on the ever-present monster sages, i'm reminded of the SAGA Dragonlance bestiary, which was written from the perspective of Caramon's memoirs and what he'd heard from others. And being Caramon, he lets the reader know exactly what he thinks of each beastie

as i recall, he spends the first couple of lines on the dracolich entry wrapping his head around the notion anybody/thing thinking an undead dragon was a great idea

JRM

10-03-2008 05:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9433357)

*Cactus - Cacti
Walrus - Walri
Penis - Penii
Bus - ... Bi?*

:D

(For bonus points, tell me which one of the above is actually valid.)

Cacti.

Do I earn any more for knowing walrus isn't even Latin?:o

6inTruder

10-03-2008 12:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Latin plurals are lovely, but can we move on to Horse...i?

;):p

noisms

10-03-2008 02:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Actually next are Impii.

JRM

10-03-2008 08:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9437009)
Actually next are Impii.

The collective noun for a gathering of imps is impii? Like a **Zulu impi**?

What a great idea!:cool:

Cant you just see them: disciplined ranks of little devils, wielding stench-kow hide shields, stabbing-spears and knobkerries, their officers decorated with the fur of hellcats!
;)

noisms

10-03-2008 08:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Under their leader, the mighty Impshwayo kaMpandimp.

noisms

10-04-2008 01:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Imp

Rather like a sentient homonculus, the Imp is like a ready-made race of familiars for evil wizards. It's mainly distinguished by having an instakill attack (stingy tail) and being really annoying (can only be harmed by silver or magical weapons, regenerates hit points, has a plethora of Irritation-based spells like *invisibility* at will). It is not only evil, but *very* evil.

The most intriguing thing about Imps is that, rather like cats in our universe, they pretend that their 'master' is in charge while secretly manipulating him or her behind the scenes. This brings up a whole host of possibilities in my mind for campaigns in which the players battle for years to defeat a Big Bad Evil Guy, only to discover that it was really said BBEG's pet Imp who was the power behind the throne. The Imp could escape during the final battle and go off to take over his next victim - whereupon the whole cycle would begin again. With hilarious consequences.

Quasit

The Quasit is a Chaotic Evil version of the Lawful Evil Imp, and is in most respects similar. It actually seems less powerful, though (although they do have 1 more HD), which makes me wonder why it gives more XP. Then again I should have learned by now that the XP totals were mostly plucked from thin air.

Quasits' signature move is their ability to contact a creature on the lower planes and ask it 6 questions. There's an adventure in their somewhere, no doubt about it.

demiurge1138

10-04-2008 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've done the imp-manipulating-its-master thing before. The imp Jasper played its demented necromancer master like a puppet, leading him onward in his attempts to fuse negative and positive energy to create undead with a greater semblance of life. It even told his master where to build his lab... because Jasper knew that the spot was on a weak point in the Material Plane, and that too great a change in the positive/negative energy balance would open up a portal to Pandemonium.

The party killed Jasper, but got destroyed by the necromancer and his positive-infused undead. By the time the new party got their acts together to storm the place, the portal had opened, the positive-infused undead had killed its creator, and the necromancer, the imp, and all of their victims over the years had fused into one gestalt ghost. In that form, Jasper was clearly in charge, and let its master know exactly what it thought of him.

JRM

10-04-2008 03:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9438450)

Imp

Rather like a sentient homonculus, the Imp is like a ready-made race of familiars for evil wizards. It's mainly distinguished by having an instakill attack (stingy tail) and being really annoying (can only be harmed by silver or magical weapons, regenerates hit points, has a plethora of irritation-based spells like invisibility at will). It is not only evil, but very evil.

The most intriguing thing about Imps is that, rather like cats in our universe, they pretend that their 'master' is in charge while secretly manipulating him or her behind the scenes. This brings up a whole host of possibilities in my mind for campaigns in which the players battle for years to defeat a Big Bad Evil Guy, only to discover that it was really said BBEG's pet Imp who was the power behind the throne. The Imp could escape during the final battle and go off to take over his next victim - whereupon the whole cycle would begin again. With hilarious consequences.

Now it rather bothers me that there's no mention of Imps or Quasits polymorphing into cats, it's a traditional form for a demon-familiar (although the ferret is an older one) and will allow you to have the BBEG have some use for that fluffy white Persian kitty they're stroking while they taunt the PCs.

Speaking of irritation, I long wanted to inflict a party with an imp who tried to include a word starting with "imp-" in every sentence he said (impulsive, impertinent, impression, important etc), until even its Master would want to sent the little blighter back to Heck. Unfortunately, the only Evil wizard I ever DM'd who gained a special familiar was Chaotic, so I had to settle for an annoying Quasit instead.
:p

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9438450)
Quasit

The Quasit is a Chaotic Evil version of the Lawful Evil Imp, and is in most respects similar. It actually seems less powerful, though (although they do have 1 more HD), which makes me wonder why it gives more XP. Then again I should have learned by now that the XP totals were mostly plucked from thin air.

Quasits' signature move is their ability to contact a creature on the lower planes and ask it 6 questions. There's an adventure in their somewhere, no doubt about it.

Yes, Imps are a lot more powerful, a Quasit claws' minor Dex-sapping venom hardly compares to an Imp tail's insta-kill poison.

The XPs were not 'plucked fro thin air' though, it's just that the DMG tables used to calculate them sometimes gave inconsistent results - they were over reliant on Hit Dice, for example, so a high HD creature with no powers like a whale or Brontosaurus could be worth an awful lot of XP despite being fairly easy for a well-equipped party to slay from a distance. Quasits got higher XP because they had the same powers (poison, spells, magic resistance etc) but more Hit Dice, and they did not allow for the different effectiveness of their poison.

noisms

10-04-2008 10:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9438973)

The XPs were not 'plucked fro thin air' though, it's just that the DMG tables used to calculate them sometimes gave inconsistent results - they were over reliant on Hit Dice, for example, so a high HD creature with no powers like a whale or Brontosaurus could be worth an awful lot of XP despite being fairly easy for a well-equipped party to slay from a distance. Quasits got higher XP because they had the same powers (poison, spells, magic resistance etc) but more Hit Dice, and they did not allow for the different effectiveness of their poison.

Yeah, I know, I was just being facetious. ;) Instakill abilities were never properly represented in the XP totals, so you get ridiculous anomalies like the Catoblepas only being worth 975 points.

DMH

10-04-2008 10:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Now that insects are next up, I want to make an observation on some previous insects- the beetles don't have fly speeds. Beetles have wings and they fly, so why were they not given a fly speed?

MuscaDomestica

10-04-2008 11:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9440331)

Now that insects are next up, I want to make an observation on some previous insects- the beetles don't have fly speeds. Beetles have wings and they fly, so why were they not given a fly speed?

Because on a whole a beetle would rather walk then fly, most of them suck in the air. There are tens of thousands of exceptions, but they are beetles there are over 350,000 known species so there is variation. Anyways its a fun thing to do to the PCs. Jump across a pit to escape the flesh eating scarabs, and they just fly across and swarm over them.

DMH

10-04-2008 11:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

But that is real world facts. Rhino beetles don't get 12' long on Earth. Seeing (and hearing) them flying over a forest on Greyhawk would be terrifying even if they have a manuver class of D or E.

JRM

10-05-2008 12:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9441652)

But that is real world facts. Rhino beetles don't get 12' long on Earth. Seeing (and hearing) them flying over a forest on Greyhawk would be terrifying even if they have a maneuver class of D or E.

Yes, that would make a cool image, and I'd probably homebrew some species of Giant Beetles with functional wings.

I'd like the Giant Praying Mantis to have a fly speed to, which it does in some editions of the game.

see

10-06-2008 02:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I note that the OED goes with "hydras" for the plural of the "fabulous many-headed snake of the marshes of Lerna" and derivative meanings, reserving "hydrae" exclusively for members of the genus of Hydrozoa.

JRM

10-07-2008 02:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9447204)

I note that the OED goes with "hydras" for the plural of the "fabulous many-headed snake of the marshes of Lerna" and derivative meanings, reserving "hydrae" exclusively for members of the genus of Hydrozoa.

It does? That's interesting, the Concise Oxford I looked hydra up in didn't give a plural. Not enough space, I guess. Still, I feel either hydras or hydrae are both acceptable, although I prefer the sound of the former.

E.T.Smith

10-07-2008 08:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9447204)

I note that the OED goes with "hydras" for the plural of the "fabulous many-headed snake of the marshes of Lerna" and derivative meanings, reserving "hydrae" exclusively for members of the genus of Hydrozoa.

But how does [Hydrox](#) fit into all of this?

JRM

10-07-2008 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9450320)
But how does Hydrox fit into all of this?

What, didn't you know hydra flesh tastes like chocolate, and can be liquidized and baked to a dark, biscuity substance?

I dread to think what they use for the creamy filling....eek;;)

Kakita Kojiro

10-08-2008 02:43 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by E.T.Smith (Post 9450320)
But how does Hydrox fit into all of this?

Temporarily [reissued](#), actually. Their head was chopped off, but it has grown back, as it were.

And, as much as I appreciate linguistic pedantry, to be sure... bring on the bugs and, er, Invisible things and such!

JRM

10-08-2008 05:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9453632)
Temporarily reissued, actually. Their head was chopped off, but it has grown back, as it were.

And, as much as I appreciate linguistic pedantry, to be sure... bring on the bugs and, er, Invisible things and such!

We haven't finished with the Imps yet.

Where are our Imps (Mephits), eh, noisms!?

In the meantime I'll try to think of something interesting to say about them. Which may prove difficult, since I never found Mephits very exciting.

noisms

10-08-2008 04:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Having network connection problems. Back in the swing of things tomorrow (I think).

noisms

10-09-2008 07:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Imp, Mephit

Mephits. Tough to find much to say about them as they are in standard 2nd edition AD&D. In various Planescape Monstrous Compendia and the Inner Planes book more of an effort was made to flesh them out, but here they just seem a little... bland? Although I like the plot hook of the party running across one and finding out it is carrying an important message from Fiend A to Fiend B about Plan X or whatever. As ways to start adventures go it's about as subtle as a sledgehammer, but none the worse for that. I also have a special place in my heart for Salt Mephits, who have killed a total of three characters in my games - each time a different campaign. (Though there are no Salt Mephits here.)

A Mephit is a "nasty little messenger" created by lower planar inhabitants from primordial elemental matter. There is thus a type for each elemental, quasi-elemental and para-elemental plane, though not all of them are outlined in the MM. The ones detailed are:

Fire Mephits - the most mischievous variety, who as you would expect can breathe/shoot fire and touch to cause heat damage, as well as *gate* in other fire mephits, or steam, smoke or lava ones.

Ice Mephit - These are "aloof and cruel, surpassing all other mephits in the fine arts of torture and wanton destruction". Destruction's no good unless it's wanton, really, is it? They can shoot ice shards, and also *gate* other ice or mist mephits.

Lava Mephit - Renamed the Magma Mephit in Planescape, these are unintelligent and shoot blobs of lava. They can, you've guessed it, *gate* other mephits.

Mist Mephit - These fancy themselves as spies, and enjoy shopping in other mephits to their fiendish overlords. They can create walls of fog and other misty things.

Smoke Mephit - "Smoke mephits are crude and lazy. They spend most of their time lounging around invisible, smoking pipe weed, telling bad jokes about their creators, and shirking their responsibilities." Smoking pipe weed! I wonder if they're any relation to halflings? Their weapon is a ball of soot which causes blindness - possibly the most piss-poor breath weapon in the MM>

Steam Mephit - These believe themselves to be the lords of all mephits, and like to boss the others around. Their special attack is a mini-rainstorm of boiling hot water.

DMH

10-09-2008 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

In the 3rd edition, they made mephits TN elementals with the outsider type. It gives them more flexibility, but the write up is even more dull than the Monstrous Manual.

(un)reason

10-09-2008 08:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9461129)

Imp, Mephit

Mephits. Tough to find much to say about them as they are in standard 2nd edition AD&D. In various Planescape Monstrous Compendia and the Inner Planes book more of an effort was made to flesh them out, but here they just seem a little... bland?

Well, that's true of all the fiend type entries. They give you just enough info to let you know the other ones are out there, in another book. Which was vaguely galling when I first got the book. What, something this big and they still can't fit all the monsters in? But then, this was the era when they would regularly mention metaplot details that happened in other books and not explain them, to force you to buy all the stuff if you wanted a proper idea of what was going on. This is just part of encouraging the gotta buy them all mentality to squeeze every drop out of their fanbase.

noisms

10-09-2008 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9461226)

Well, that's true of all the fiend type entries. They give you just enough info to let you know the other ones are out there, in another book. Which was vaguely galling when I first got the book. What, something this big and they still can't fit all the monsters in? But then, this was the era when they would regularly mention metaplot details that happened in other books and not explain them, to force you to buy all the stuff if you wanted a proper idea of what was going on. This is just part of encouraging the gotta buy them all mentality to squeeze every drop out of their fanbase.

That's always been D&D's greatest failing. I don't think it's changed much down the years, though these days you get less superfluous fluff but more superfluous crunch.

David J Prokopetz

10-09-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9461129)

Smoke Mephit - "Smoke mephits are crude and lazy. They spend most of their time lounging around invisible, smoking pipe weed, telling bad jokes about their creators, and shirking their responsibilities."

I knew a guy back in the day who claimed that smoke mephits are a deliberate racial stereotype - you know, the ones with sooty black skin just happen to be the crude, lazy, indulgent ones. I thought he was out to lunch, given that **all** mephits are horrible people, but the earlier discussion about racial caricatures in the "human" entry reminded me of it.

(Personally, I think they read more as stereotypical pot-heads than any sort of racial caricature.)

demiurge1138

10-10-2008 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

With the mephits in 3rd Edition, I like to think of them as the common folk of the elemental planes. Sure, the genies are the ones actually in charge (although the salamanders would probably disagree, I don't see them building a City of Brass), and the elementals are what mortals tend to think of as the exemplars of the planes. But most of the actual civilizations are mephits.

In a Planescape game I ran, one of the PCs was a monk who had a steam mephit cohort. The mephit's primary purpose was to provide a distraction in combat and make tea.

Kakita Kojiro

10-10-2008 10:23 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9461226)

Well, that's true of all the fiend type entries. They give you just enough info to let you know the other ones are out there, in another book. Which was vaguely galling when I first got the book. What, something this big and they still can't fit all the monsters in? But then, this was the era when they would regularly mention metaplot details that happened in other books and not explain them, to force you to buy all the stuff if you wanted a proper idea of what was going on. This is just part of encouraging the gotta buy them all mentality to squeeze every drop out of their fanbase.

Maybe all that's old is new again, then: the 4th edition Monster Manual is deliberately missing some of the old, iconic standbys, apparently just so you'll buy the next Monster Manual (and Dragonomicon, etc.). It even mentions, fr'ex, the metallic dragons that are missing.

Even in D&D, some things never change. (although I really don't begrudge them trying to squeeze money out of the fanbase; that's their *job*, after all)

Kapten

10-10-2008 09:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9464380)

Maybe all that's old is new again, then: the 4th edition Monster Manual is deliberately missing some of the old, iconic standbys, apparently just so you'll buy the next Monster Manual (and Dragonomicon, etc.). It even mentions, fr'ex, the metallic dragons that are missing.

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I don't quite agree; if you start playing D&D with 4th edition you won't know that frost giants are missing. If you just started playing 2nd edition, you would be pretty confused by the fiend entries.

This has happened again with the references to the metallic dragons but not to the same degree as some of the entries in the 2nd edition MM.

JRM

10-11-2008 07:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I was stumped for anything to say about mephits, they never sparked my imagination. After reading through their Monstrous Manual entry only a few factoids caught my interest:

"They never eat, but must return to the substance from which they were formed to heal damage (usually 1 hit point per turn in contact)."

That makes them better nuisance hit-and-run monsters - the mephits can summon some pals, mob one of the PCs and fly away to the steam-bath until their wounds heal. Unfortunately, it's too slow to be very useful except for lava mephits.

Speaking of which, the Fire mephit says they "play terrible pranks on other mephits (such as pushing lava mephits into water and watching them harden)", but the lava mephit's entry does not say they're hurt by water. Didn't their 1st edition write-ups have lava and fire mephits injured by water? I remember playing an AD&D character when our party was confronted by a fire mephit, and I just emptied a waterskin over it and the creature just fizzled out.

Also, what happens if a lava mephit shapechanges into a lava pool after grappling someone, do they do 2d8+2 heat damage per round as if they were hitting with both claws? What if they lava-pool while swimming in a lake of lava, do they dissolve into it or are they intact but invisible?

But then I saw noism's smoke mephit write up.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9461129)

[u]Smoke Mephit - "Smoke mephits are crude and lazy. They spend most of their time lounging around invisible, smoking pipe weed, telling bad jokes about their creators, and shirking their responsibilities." Smoking pipe weed! I wonder if they're any relation to halflings? Their weapon is a ball of soot which causes blindness - possibly the most piss-poor breath weapon in the MM>

How could I have missed this - ignorant and indolent, liking to lie about smoking while bitching about authority figures. They might as well have added that they get bouts of the munchies and like to frequent cafés in Amsterdam to the clichéd pot smoker.

Now I'm trying to come up with a reason why these "powerful fiends" would create a Smoke Mephit and not

one of the other, more useful types. Hmm...

- The master-fiend only had access to the plane of Smoke when he needed to make a servant. That's a bit boring.
- The master fiend deliberately created disobedient, lazy staff for an over- ambitious underling.
- A pesky mortal wizard demands an imp familiar, but they didn't say what kind of imp...:D
- They're all servants of a wannabe Demon Prince, The Demon Weed (:o)

That third option has the most amusing possibilities. Whenever the smoke mephit familiar gets wounded it'll start whining "I'm feeling really down man" and want to stop and light up, and it will have to completely fill the area with smoke to count as a "return to the substance from which they were formed".

Now if I ever get around to running that adventure with a chest-full of Imps (who take every opportunity to use such words as important, impulsive, impertinent, impacable, impatient, impecunious, impenitent, implacable, impersonating impracticable impoverishing, importune improper, appropriating, improvident, imprudent, impulsive, impugning, impudent and imputable) I've got to lumber the players with a few stoner smoke mephits as well.

noisms

10-11-2008 11:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9466065)

I don't quite agree; if you start playing D&D with 4th edition you won't know that frost giants are missing. If you just started playing 2nd edition, you would be pretty confused by the fiend entries.

This has happened again with the references to the metallic dragons but not to the same degree as some of the entries in the 2nd edition MM.

What bothers me the most are the opaque references to campaign settings - usually to do with stuff from the Forgotten Realms, which I always hated.

The psionics feels oddly misplaced too. Psionics weren't part of the core rules so it seems odd that psionic monsters should be so common in the MM. A psionic monsters compendium would have made a lot more sense.

Wakboth

10-11-2008 04:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9468197)

Speaking of which, the Fire mephit says they "play terrible pranks on other mephits (such as pushing lava mephits into water and watching them harden)", but the lava mephit's entry does not say they're hurt by water. Didn't their 1st edition write-ups have lava and fire mephits injured by water? I remember playing an AD&D character when our party was confronted by a fire mephit, and I just emptied a waterskin over it and the creature just fizzled out.

No, they're not hurt by water; but I always assumed it meant the lava mephit, when immersed in a sufficiently big body of water (so as not to boil it away) would stiffen and be nearly immobilized. Then the fire mephit points and laughs as the lava mephit struggles to walk out of the pool, prudently flying off long before it can take more than a step or two.

Quote:

Now I'm trying to come up with a reason why these "powerful fiends" would create a Smoke Mephit and not one of the other, more useful types. Hmm...

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- They're all servants of a wannabe Demon Prince, The Demon Weed (:o)

Maybe you can't choose what kind of a mephit you create; if you have fiery elemental stuff, any of the "hot" mephits is a possibility. Thus, tons of mephits that nobody wants, and that have managed to avoid getting squashed instantly... :)

Quote:

Now if I ever get around to running that adventure with a chest-full of Imps (who take every opportunity to use such words as important, impulsive, impertinent, impacable, impatient, impecunious, impenitent, implacable, impersonating impracticable impoverishing, importune improper, appropriating, improvident, imprudent, impulsive impugning, impudent and imputable) I've got to lumber the players with a few stoner smoke mephits as well.

Mephits made great comic relief and annoyance characters/monsters in Planescape. And unlike the sprites, nobody felt bad when they finally turned them into mephit-kebabs after one too many "hot foot" joke on the paladin. :D

demiurge1138

10-11-2008 05:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

My favorite mephit from Planescape was the canon Seamusxanthuszenus, a dust mephit who ran a body part dealership in Sigil. When I ran a Planescape game, my party took an instant liking to him (and his schizophrenic insistence that he "never bargains" or "always bargains", depending on which would be more advantageous), and ended up making a lot of money selling off bits of the monsters they killed.

noisms

10-11-2008 07:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Can you tell I'm trying to recharge my batteries before taking on the mammoth Insect entry?

JRM

10-11-2008 08:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9469615)

No, they're not hurt by water; but I always assumed it meant the lava mephit, when immersed in a sufficiently big body of water (so as not to boil it away) would stiffen and be nearly immobilized. Then the fire mephit points and laughs as the lava mephit struggles to walk out of the pool, prudently flying off long before it can take more than a step or two.

That's a good idea, but it'd have been nicer if their write-up had explained how other elements affected them. I like the idea that mephits can survive in inimical environments and only suffer discomfort, they'd be of less use as long-distance messengers if a lava-mephit can't courier to the swamp-demon the next plane over.

Another curiosity about lava mephits is their write up says they're the dim bulbs amongst their kind ("Lava mephits are the least intelligent of all mephits. They are slow on the uptake and frequently the brunt of fire mephit jokes.") but their stats list the same Average (8-10) intelligence as the other varieties. Would it have killed them to give Lava mephits Low intelligence?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9469615)

Maybe you can't choose what kind of a mephit you create; if you have fiery elemental stuff, any of the "hot" mephits is a possibility. Thus, tons of mephits that nobody wants, and that have managed to avoid getting squashed instantly... :)

Well I guess that's possible, although it says "Each is created from the substance for which it is named", so I was assuming that the creator-fiend can be pretty sure what kind of mephit results just by using a particular material. Maybe if the fiend makes a mistake in the ritual they may get a different mephit than what they aimed for - e.g. they build a furnace to create a fire mephit, but let it get too smokey (= smoke mephit), hot enough to melt stone (= lava mephit) or some liquid falls in at a critical moment (= steam mephit).

Now I wonder what a fiend would do with a ton of unwanted mephits. Set up a "second hand mephit" stall in Sigyl and flog them off as cheap slaves?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9469615)

Mephits made great comic relief and annoyance characters/monsters in Planescape. And unlike the sprites, nobody felt bad when they finally turned them into mephit-kebabs after one too many "hot foot" joke on the paladin. :D

Yes, I can't see any self-respecting fiend using mephits for anything more than errand boys and general dogsbodies, so I've only used them as nuisance monsters.

Now what other adventure-ideas can apply to mephits. The "intercept a mephit carrying a vital message" idea

seems a bit forced to me. Would you trust one of these clowns to do anything important? How about a "intercept a smoke/mist mephitis who's fled captivity/slavery after stealing something important" or "the land is plagued by swarms of mephitis summoned by some mysterious force - you must stop it!"

JRM

10-12-2008 05:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9469864)

Can you tell I'm trying to recharge my batteries before taking on the mammoth Insect entry? ;)

Mammoth Insect?

Is that a huge shaggy beetle with tusks and a trunk?

Sounds good to me! What will these mad wizards come up with next.

Now I'm tempted to stat them up, with Giant Sabre-Toothed Mantises as their "natural" predators.

I'm happy to wait until you're recharged, take your time.

noisms

10-12-2008 11:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Insect

Insects, "the heartiest and most numerous of creatures" according to the MM, get a mega-entry of unprecedented proportions. So with a deep breath, off we go:

Ant, Giant - There are worker and soldier varieties, plus a queen with 10 HD. The No. Appearing is only 1-100, which I suppose it would have to be in the interests of maintaining a sensible game world. Imagine if a Giant Ants' nest was as populous as an ants' nest is in real life - millions upon millions of the buggers stripping the world of all its nutrients until it resembled a barren wilderness.

Ant Lion, Giant - This is a creature which lurks at the bottom of sand pits, and eats anything that falls in.

Aratha - I'm not sure what this is, actually, because there is no picture and the description is extremely terse. It has 8 tentacles and psionic powers, whatever it is.

Aspis Cow, Aspis Drone, and Aspis Larva - I don't know what an Aspis is either, frankly. Some kind of ant thing from 1e?

Assassin Bug - These are nasty creatures that inject eggs into your body, which then hatch and eat you alive. They can only be got rid of by a *wish* or *limited wish*, which seems like overkill to me.

Bee, Worker and Bee, Soldier - You know what these are, I'll wager.

Bumblebee - These too. Again, you have to wonder what the world would be like if the numbers of giant insects matched their real-world counterparts; but a nest apparently only contains 1d6+6 of the things.

Cave Cricket - These produce so much noise that they can drown out conversation and spellcasting - specifically designed for a dungeon crawl game, one might say. You can imagine why dwarves would appreciate their existence. An entire citadel could be decked out with captive cave crickets to prevent magical entry.

Dragonfly and Dragonfly Larva - The Giant Dragonfly eats its prey in mid-air; the larva eat them on the ground, but their mandibles are hidden out of sight so they can often represent a nasty surprise. (50% chance - our old friend exception based design, which we haven't seen in a while.)

Ear Seeker - Khaaaaaaaaannn!!!!!! Sorry. Anyway, you'd better hope you don't end up with one of these, because you'll be dead within d4 days unless the dice are very kind.

Giant Firefly - These can concentrate their light into a laser beam which causes 5d4 in damage.

Fly, Giant Bluebottle and Fly, Giant Horsefly - Self explanatory, really.

Fyrefly - Ah, the good old "replace an i with a y to make it seem more 'fantastycal'" routine. These insects cause fires whenever they alight on flammable materials.

Horax - These things can hold on once they've made a successful hit, and won't let go until death.

Hornet, Giant - Giant Hornets' stingers are among the strongest of the giant insects, causing 5d6 damage and 2d6 hours of paralysation.

Pernicon - Pernicons attack by burrowing under clothes and armour, causing both hit point and constitution damage.

Praying Mantis, Gargantuan - You have to wonder why the Praying Mantis is 'Gargantuan' and not just 'Giant'. Anyway, being eaten by a Praying Mantis wouldn't be much fun. There are lots of them in my neighbourhood and they seem to enjoy taking their time chewing on still-living prey.

Termite, Giant Harvester - The neat trick of the termite is to spit kerosene, which blinds victims and can then be ignited to cause more damage.

Tick - A tick bite can transmit a disease which causes death with 2d4 days unless a *cure disease* spell is cast.

Wasp, Giant - This is essentially identical to the Giant Hornet.

David J Prokopetz

10-12-2008 12:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

Ear Seeker - Khaaaaaaaaannn!!!!!! Sorry. Anyway, you'd better hope you don't end up with one of these, because you'll be dead within d4 days unless the dice are very kind.

Another designed-for-the-dungeon beastie - they're a parasite whose life cycle depends on some hapless mammal pressing its ear up against a wooden surface.

(IIRC, Mr. Gyax up and admitted that he'd introduced them into the game solely because the thieves in his party were stopping to listen at every single door, thereby slowing down play. Of course, I'm betting he didn't stop using scenarios that punish players for **not** listening at doors - I imagine that's how the practice of listening at every door became entrenched in the first place - so this creates a lovely little damned-if-you-do, damned-if-

you-don't situation. :D)

demiurge1138

10-12-2008 12:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Yeah, that's the really annoying thing about the 2e mega-condensed entries. Creatures like horaxes, aspis and arathra get the short-end of the stick, because we people in the real world have no idea what they are (as opposed to a giant ant, fly or termite, which we can make reasonable mental images of).

What's the thing in the illustration riding a giant fly? Looks vaguely goblin-y, but not like any of the goblinoids in the book.

Kakita Kojiro

10-12-2008 12:37 PM

Ear Seekers were also the reason our characters used to carry around hearing cones (with wire mesh-covered openings), in addition to our 10-ft poles, etc. Another cause of the D&D armsrace between PC & DM.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

Giant Firefly - These can concentrate their light into a laser beam which causes 5d4 in damage.

o_O

... maybe I just blocked that one from memory.

noisms

10-12-2008 01:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9472120)

Another designed-for-the-dungeon beastie - they're a parasite whose life cycle depends on some hapless mammal pressing its ear up against a wooden surface.

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And nothing wrong with those. :D

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9472136)

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What's the thing in the illustration riding a giant fly? Looks vaguely goblin-y, but not like any of the goblinoids in the book.

I'm not sure, to be honest. Irritatingly the MM doesn't provide sizes for the insects, so there's no way of knowing how big or small the creature would have to be. I love the picture, though.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9472216)

... maybe I just blocked that one from memory.

Well, it doesn't actually say 'laser beam'; the actual line is: "the giant firefly can brighten its abdomen once every turn, creating a beam of greenish light that causes 5d4 points of damage." But that's a laser beam in my book. ;)

David J Prokopetz

10-12-2008 02:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472339)

And nothing wrong with those. :D

Only to a point, to my mind. I'm sure you've seen my recent screeds about how the style of play a game's rules end up encouraging can be wildly different from the style of play the designer was actually going for. Contriving scenarios that punish players for playing as the rules encourage them to play rather than playing as the "flavour text" encourages them to play is only going to get you so far - eventually, you just have to bite the bullet and change the rules.

Azimer the Mad

10-12-2008 05:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I loved the mephitis write-ups in Planescape. They weren't messengers, they were MESSAGES. Fiends would send the poor annoying schulbs as "gifts," and each write-up included the "meaning" of the mephitis, from "I am plotting your death" to "you do not concern me." Like a winged, sarcastic horse head.

see

10-12-2008 05:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9472216)

Ear Seekers were also the reason our characters used to carry around hearing cones (with wire mesh-covered openings), in addition to our 10-ft poles, etc.

See, hearing cones should be standard anyway, since you'd get the same amplification effect as holding a glass to a door to hear through it. Anybody who put their ears to the door *deserved* an ear seeker for not having thought to bring a method of amplifying sounds heard through a door. :D

And a ten-foot pole? :eek: No, no, no. Go with a twelve-foot ox-tongue spear, which adds cutting to the things you can do a long way away as well as giving an extra two feet of length.

noisms

10-12-2008 05:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Azimer the Mad (Post 9472719)

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And then the poor unfortunate mephit gets torn apart, because what fiend gives a shit about shooting the messenger? ;)

JRM

10-12-2008 07:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

[u]Aratha - I'm not sure what this is, actually, because there is no picture and the description is extremely terse. It has 8 tentacles and psionic powers, whatever it is.

The Aratha resembles a large beetle which has four 10' long mouth-tentacles that end with slicing shears where a normal beetle's mandibles would be. They originally appeared in Dragon magazine 89, where they're given the common name "Killer Beetle", with Aratha as an alternative name. They have the curious instinct that when they get too old and feel they will soon begin to weaken they go hunting for the most powerful enemy

they can find, in order to die in a blaze of glory.

Oh and it's four tentacles, not eight.

They've turned up several times in games I've DM'd, just because I liked the look/feel of them. In my campaign they're animals from the Illithids' alien realm (four mouth tentacles, psionic powers - it's a pretty obvious deduction), although there's nothing in their Dragon magazine write-up that says this.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

Aspis Cow, Aspis Drone, and Aspis Larva - I don't know what an Aspis is either, frankly. Some kind of ant thing from 1e?

Aspis are the bug-people from the **Slave Lords series of modules** (A1-A4). The male drones basically look like bipedal weevils with four arms they can wield weapons with - see the cover of **A1 Slave Pits of the Undercity** for an illustration of them. The larvae and adult females ("Aspis Cow") both look like oversized maggots, *very* oversized in the case of the ladies.

JRM

10-12-2008 07:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9472721)

See, hearing cones should be standard anyway, since you'd get the same amplification effect as holding a glass to a door to hear through it. Anybody who put their ears to the doordeserved an ear seeker for not having thought to bring a method of amplifying sounds heard through a door. :D

But then the DM introduces a door-monster that stuns its victims with a sonic blast, which the ear-trumpet makes you more vulnerable to.

The D&D monster-adventurer arms race must never end!:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9472721)

And a ten-foot pole? :eek: No, no, no. Go with a twelve-foot ox-tongue spear, which adds cutting to the things you can do a long way away as well as giving an extra two feet of length.

Definitely agree with you there, my characters usually use a spear rather than a pole - preferably one that unscrews into sections if you need to get through a tight squeeze. The really well prepared ones may have different attachments to screw on the end (e.g. a torch holder to burn objects at a distance; a hook and padded grasper to manipulate things), and the 'neck' of the spearhead had a *Continual Light* on it which could be obscured with a sliding lockable cover.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Azimer the Mad (Post 9472719)

I loved the mephit write-ups in Planescape. They weren't messengers, they were MESSAGES. Fiends would send the poor annoying schulbs as "gifts," and each write-up included the "meaning" of the mephit, from "I am plotting your death" to "you do not concern me." Like a winged, sarcastic horse head.

Oh that's a great idea.

I never got into any of 2nd editions' campaigns world back in the day, which I now regret since some of them, like Planescape, were really interesting.

Does that mean that if a pack of devils have a room full of mephits they send out a lot of form letters? Of the "Dear customer, thank you for your inquiry regarding the status of our agreement. Please be assured you will Burn In Tartarus For All Eternity!!" kind.

sim_james

10-12-2008 08:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9472136)

Yeah, that's the really annoying thing about the 2e mega-condensed entries. Creatures like horaxes, aspis and arathra get the short-end of the stick, because we people in the real world have no idea what they are (as opposed to a giant ant, fly or termite, which we can make reasonable mental images of).

I think that they're all "monster" insects rather than just really big bugs, and as such really needed their own entries.

If I recall correctly, Horax come from the Taladas campaign setting described in Zeb Cook's *Time of the Dragon* boxed set. They are desert carnivores from the Shining Land, and look a bit like 4' fleas with a hard, almost turtle-like shell. Naturally, you could make armour out of them - AC 3 or 4, I think.

There was a bit of details about their mating rituals that made my Dad laugh, but it's been almost fifteen years so I don't remember what they were. :p

Quote:

Originally Posted by Azimer the Mad (Post 9472719)

I loved the mephit write-ups in Planescape. They weren't messengers, they were MESSAGES. Fiends would send the poor annoying schulbs as "gifts," and each write-up included the "meaning" of the mephit, from "I am plotting your death" to "you do not concern me." Like a winged, sarcastic horse head.

Yeah, I remember that.

Explains why the irritating mephits like smokeys really exist - the fiends create them to be *deliberately* annoying!

JRM

10-12-2008 09:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9473057)

If I recall correctly, Horax come from the Taladas campaign setting described in Zeb Cook's Time of the Dragon boxed set. They are desert carnivores from the Shining Land, and look a bit like 4' fleas with a hard, almost turtle-like shell. Naturally, you could make armour out of them - AC 3 or 4, I think.

There was a bit of details about their mating rituals that made my Dad laugh, but it's been almost fifteen years so I don't remember what they were. :p

Did a bit of google-fu and what I came across suggests that your recollections are correct. Wikipedia's **List of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd edition monsters** says Horax's are from Time of the Dragon (1989) and appeared in the Monstrous Compendium - Dragonlance Appendix (1990), and there's an enworld post on "**Critter Bits and Magic Recipes**"* which says:

Monstrous Compendium Vol 4 (Dragonlance):

The back plates of the horax can be fashioned into a light-weight and durable armor (AC 4) by armorers experienced at handling the stuff. The Glass Sailors of Taladas are among the best in the world at this art.

*By the way noisms, the afore mentioned post should prove useful for your big book on making armour from monsters.

They also have a **3.0 D&D conversion** for the Horax on the Dragonlance nexus.

Couldn't find any info on their mating practices, alas.:o

JRM

10-12-2008 09:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9473057)

Explains why the irritating mephits like smokeys really exist - the fiends create them to be deliberately annoying!

They did it just to be evil, the fiends!:eek:

Well I guess it is pretty fiendish to made a monster just to annoy people.:)

DMH

10-12-2008 10:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

Dragonfly and Dragonfly Larva - The Giant Dragonfly eats its prey in mid-air; the larva eat them on the ground, but their mandibles are hidden out of sight so they can often represent a nasty surprise. (50% chance - our old friend exception based design, which we haven't seen in a while.)

They made the naiads terrestrial? Dragonflies are found around water because their nymphs are aquatic. And they have the coolest prey capture device.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Dragonfly_larva.jpg

It isn't a larva btw, but under the head is a lower lip that extends out like a lobster claw. In the photo, you can see the hinge under the head. Some capture prey as large as themselves.

And they dropped the ball in this entry- where are cockroaches, tiger beetles and giant grasshoppers amongst many others?

JRM

10-13-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9473268)

They made the naiads terrestrial? Dragonflies are found around water because their nymphs are aquatic. And they have the coolest prey capture device.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Dragonfly_larva.jpg

It isn't a larva btw, but under the head is a lower lip that extends out like a lobster claw. In the photo, you can see the hinge under the head. Some capture prey as large as themselves.

And they dropped the ball in this entry- where are cockroaches, tiger beetles and giant grasshoppers amongst many others?

Curiously enough, their full write-up in earlier AD&D sources* specified that giant dragonfly naiads are aquatic. I guess that fact just got squeezed out when shrunk the entry to fit into the Monstrous Manual. Even so, the entry implies dragonfly nymphs are at least amphibious - they have move 9" land, 3" swim, 24" jet (that's a water-jet speed like a giant squid).

*If I remember correctly, giant dragonflies debuted in Gary Gygax's The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror, later to

reappear in the original Monster Manual II.

There's nothing wrong with calling them larva, since technically a **nymph** is a variety of insect larva.

EDIT: And I agree with you about the tiger beetles *et al.* There are plenty of other insects (and other arthropods) that would make great monsters.

MuscaDomestica

10-13-2008 02:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9473693)

*There's nothing wrong with calling them larva, since technically a **nymph** is a variety of insect larva.*

EDIT: And I agree with you about the tiger beetles et al. There are plenty of other insects (and other arthropods) that would make great monsters.

Tiger beetles are great, active predators that run down their prey.

<http://gallery.photo.net/photo/5922595-md.jpg>

Also their larvae are fun as well. They hide in holes and jump out when something comes near.

<http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3293/...be9e61.jpg?v=0>

(and technically a larva is the young from an insect that goes through complex/complete metamorphosis. Dragonflies do not so their young would be nymphs.)

JRM

10-13-2008 05:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 9473817)

(and technically a larva is the young from an insect that goes through complex/complete metamorphosis. Dragonfly do not so their young would be nymphs.)

Oh sorry, I was trying to say that you can use larva in the general sense of an immature form of an animal that undergoes metamorphosis, while you're talking about **holometabolic insects**.

I'll agree that's its more correct to say dragonflies have nymphs (or naiads) for young.

As for tiger beetles, it's odd how few roleplaying games with giant insects feature them. The only one I can think of off the top of my head is RuneQuest, where trolls use them as guard and attack beasts (aka "Watch Beetles").

I also think carnivorous bugs like giant assassin bugs (Reduviidae) and water bugs (Nepomorpha) would make excellent monsters, but they're also often ignored in AD&D and most other roleplaying games. Giant water

bugs (Belostomatidae) can grow as big as a hand in real life, just imagine how large a monstrous fantasy version of one of those would be!

DMH

10-13-2008 05:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Not only tiger beetles (what species is in that photo, House Fly?), but adult ant lions. How many people know what an owlfly or adult antlion are? Giant dragonfly stats could be used for them.

JRM

10-13-2008 06:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9474366)

Not only tiger beetles (what species is in that photo, House Fly?), but adult ant lions. How many people know what an owlfly or adult antlion are? Giant dragonfly stats could be used for them.

I'd drop their flight speed and maneuverability class since adult antlions are poor fliers compared to dragonflies. Plus, if I remember rightly not all antlions have predatory adults - some just eat nectar and pollen. Although, obviously if this is an AD&D version the adults will tend to be of the more carnivorous variety!

JRM

10-13-2008 07:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9474366)

Not only tiger beetles (what species is in that photo, House Fly?)

Well there are literally thousands of species of tiger beetle. I'm guessing it's a member of the *Cicindela* genus from its sandy-coloured body with white blobs on the side, since a lot of *Cicindela* like living on sand. (e.g. *Cicindela repanda* or *Cicindela hybrida*)

Kakita Kojiro

10-13-2008 11:04 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9474338)

As for tiger beetles, it's odd how few roleplaying games with giant insects feature them. The only one I can think of

off the top of my head is RuneQuest, where trolls use them as guard and attack beasts (aka "Watch Beetles").

I think the reason is that Sandy Petersen is by training a biologist (before he went on to program *Doom*), whereas none of the D&D creators had that kind of background. That is why RQ had non-laser-bearing giant insects, trolls with their detailed cultures and biologies, prehistorical fauna appropriate to the climate for the Praxians to ride, etc.

... The reason I know this is that I got to listen to Sandy Petersen talk about it -- along with him going on a rant about how unrealistic the physics of giant insects are*. All the while, a biologist friend of mine was muttering under her breath in agreement.

D&D probably could've used a Sandy to polish up some of the odder monster concepts.

* he made an exception for giant spiders, since their lungs were scale-up-able. (edit: yes, I know spiders are not *insects*, but if the biologists were fine talking as though they were, I'm certainly not going to gainsay them.)

MuscaDomestica

10-13-2008 02:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Not sure the genus, found it in a GiS a while ago, uploaded it to my flickr account.

DMH

10-13-2008 08:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9473693)

There are plenty of other insects (and other arthropods) that would make great monsters.

Not just arthropods. There are plenty of worms* (see Dragon 133), echinoderms, molluscs and others** that would make nifty critters.

*Not that worm is any way accurate as there are ~13 phyla that can be called worms.

**Personally I would like to see a write up for kinorhynchs and arrow worms

The Last Conformist

10-13-2008 09:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Speaking of giant arthropods, it's a shame no RPG seems to feature [eurypterids](#). The largest ones were over two meters in length.

DMH

10-13-2008 09:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Dragon 176 has eurypterids in Playing in the Paleozoic.

DMH

10-13-2008 09:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

They have ear seekers, but where are rot grubs? I can't find them in the MM or any of the annual MCs.

Has anyone taken the time to describe the adult form?

JRM

10-14-2008 02:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9476692)

They have ear seekers, but where are rot grubs? I can't find them in the MM or any of the annual MCs.

Has anyone taken the time to describe the adult form?

If I remember the Ecology of the Rot Grub article from Dragon #122 correctly an adult rot grub just looks like a larger juvenile. Indeed, calling them "grubs" may be a misnomer, since they're described as resembling flesh-burrowing worms more than the larval form of an insect.

Despite this, it would be cool if rot grubs were literally grubs. Maybe they're the immature form of flesh-eating scarabs? That makes a twisted sort of sense.

My memory might be failing me though, I'll just pull out my Dragon Magazine Archive CDs to check...

...yes, Ed Greenwood's Ecology article says that "rot grubs" can be adults, and that they're hermaphrodites. That's definitely more worm than insect. I think I can safely copy-and-paste the relevant extract under fair-use copyright rules:

...All of you know that a rot grub will burrow to the heart of a man or any larger, living, and blooded creature in a very short time. Know now that rot grubs do this in order to breed.

"Rot grubs need flesh soaked in blood and rich in oxygen, such as that of the heart, in which to lay their eggs, for only in such an environment can the eggs be fertilized. They burrow there by instinct and lay a cluster of from six to a dozen eggs even if no other rot grub is present to fertilize the clutch. My experiments have shown that all grubs can lay eggs, and all can fertilize the eggs of others, although apparently not their own." Noting some stirring from the front rows, the sage lowered the wooden probe and gently poked at the mutton. "We are safe," he said, "so long as our friend is occupied."

The comment drew no laughter. The sage then reached into a pocket in his robes and brought out a slim, firmly-stoppered glass phial. "These are a bit small, but it is perilous to expose them to the air so near a live rot grub. In this phial are four rot grub eggs: small, green-white rubbery spheres a little less than the size of your smallest fingernail. As I've said, one rot grub lays a clutch of these, and if another rot grub

comes into contact with the host creature, it will also burrow to the heart, locate the eggs by the scent and burrowing tube left by its predecessor, and exude a red, viscous fluid from its mouth as it rolls the eggs about and examines them. This fluid penetrates the outer skin of the eggs. If the second rot grub arrives within twenty minutes of the laying of the eggs, successful fertilization occurs. Otherwise, the eggs die.

"Fertilized eggs and grubs can survive for long periods in carrion, even entombed corpses, or anywhere that affords protection from crushing, air, water, and extremes of temperature. They cease to move and function, and thus cease to require food, air, or like sustenance. The rot grub in this meat can wait here for a very long time for a live host — precisely how long, my knowledge at present does not answer, but at least two centuries, as the opening of the tomb of King Eurovan of the now-vanished realm of Nuvorene attests; a tomb-robber was slain by rot grubs then. In such a suspended state does the rot grub lie until vibration, the actual movement of their 'home' meat, or contact with warm, living flesh awakens it."

MuscaDomestica

10-14-2008 06:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I think it would be cooler if the adult form of the Rot grub (there are beetles that have larvae that can reproduce) was some sort of beautiful harmless flying creature... has anyone seen baby fairies before?

DMH

10-14-2008 06:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Fraggle Rock, though I don't remember the name of the critter that was infesting the Gorgs' garden.

As for rot grubs, they could be pedogenic (ie larvae that produce larvae, as MD said) but I would rather see some kind of adult.

When I get back on my computer, I have a quote from Dragon 211's Ecology of the Dungeon that provides a unusual use for rot grubs.

DMH

10-14-2008 09:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And here is that quote.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Dragon 211

Not all the trash, however, would make it to the dump pit. Many humanoids are lazy and environmentally unconscious. Garbage of the most unpleasant kind may be found throughout the caverns of a dungeon. Piles of guni and carcasses are in many rooms, a few covering secret chests of "treasure". When dealing with refuse, remember that any mention of trash makes experienced players think of rot grubs, otyughs, and other unpleasant monsters. In many adventures, I have casually stated that the player characters can see wormlike creatures moving through the

filth. While these things were nothing more than normal worms, maggots, grubs, and carrion slugs (gross but not deadly), the PCs didn't know this. To my amusement, they went through all kinds of trouble to destroy these beasties and sort through the trash. ("If there are rot grubs, then there must be some kind of treasure".) Simple parasites can cause as much fear and worry in a group of PCs as a lair of trolls.

demiurge1138

10-14-2008 10:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Those death's head beetles over in the B section would make good adult forms for rot grubs, methink.

noisms

10-14-2008 01:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 9478391)

I think it would be cooler if the adult form of the Rot grub (there are beetles that have larvae that can reproduce) was some sort of beautiful harmless flying creature... has anyone seen baby fairies before?

Now that is an idea worth stealing.

Wakboth

10-14-2008 01:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

This is pretty off-topic, but while we're on the subject of giant insects:
<http://www.wesleyfleming.com/gallery/index.htm>

If those were made of plastic, they'd make *perfect* giant insect figures! :)

DMH

10-14-2008 07:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9479420)

Those death's head beetles over in the B section would make good adult forms for rot grubs, methink.

They are in the MC Annual 3.

Crinos

10-14-2008 10:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9480716)
They are in the MC Annual 3.

I thought those were death WATCH beetles.

demiurge1138

10-15-2008 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9480716)
They are in the MC Annual 3.

They are? Really?

goes off to check

Well I'll be. So how the hell do I know about them, then? I blame the Tome of Horrors.

JRM

10-15-2008 05:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9480004)
This is pretty off-topic, but while we're on the subject of giant insects:
<http://www.wesleyfleming.com/gallery/index.htm>

If those were made of plastic, they'd make perfect giant insect figures! :)

Oh those are lovely, and just the right size as well. Shame they're made of glass.

JRM

10-15-2008 05:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9479420)

Those death's head beetles over in the B section would make good adult forms for rot grubs, methink.

Death's head beetles? Those don't ring a bell. AD&D has death watch beetles, but I'd think they're too big to be the adult for of rot grubs - rot grubs are only a few inches long, and death watch beetles are as big as a man.

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 9478391)

I think it would be cooler if the adult form of the Rot grub (there are beetles that have larvae that can reproduce) was some sort of beautiful harmless flying creature... has anyone seen baby fairies before?

Yes, that could work. They could be like antlions, with young far more ravenous than the adults. How about if they can lay eggs in both 'grub' and 'flier' form, and only metamorphose into a winged form when they run out of carrion?

DMH

10-15-2008 06:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

A great way to increase the use of insects is via Are You Bugged About Something? in Dragon 174. Amongst other abilities, there is the massive strength, metal laced exoskeletons (which is somewhat true), senses and resistance to toxins.

The strenght section was esp interesting- a giant bumblebee can lift more than 50 tons (if a man sized version can lift 50 tons, then a larger species should be able to lift more). Use that for hornets and wasps and they could be elephant predators.

And that could also be a way of making the aforementioned 12' long rhino beetles that much more dangerous. Or possibly useful.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita

** he made an exception for giant spiders, since their lungs were scale-up-able.*

Oxygen exchange is just one of several problems for large arthropods. They would need some chemical much stronger than chitin to get to the size of the ants in Them!.

demiurge1138

10-15-2008 10:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9483034)

Death's head beetles? Those don't ring a bell. AD&D has death watch beetles, but I'd think they're too big to be the adult for of rot grubs - rot grubs are only a few inches long, and death watch beetles are as big as a man.

Yeah, those are what I was thinking of. The size difference is a bit of an issue--but perhaps rot grubs pupate dramatically in the bodies of those adventurers they kill.

Kakita Kojiro

10-15-2008 11:46 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9483324)

The strenght section was esp interesting- a giant bumblebee can lift more than 50 tons (if a man sized version can lif 50 tons, then a larger species should be able to lift more). Use that for hornets and wasps and they could be elephan predators.

I have long thought that anyone who put giant bees into their games and did not immediately slap reins and saddles on 'em and mount up goblins or what have you is a fool -- a fool, I tell you!

Alas, I've got that aforementioned biologist in my gaming group, and all of her Stern Looks sucked the fun out of me going "bzzz!bzzz!" as my nefarious Bee Goblins swooped in to attack. :(

But, heck, maybe I should've slapped *minotaurs* on 'em with that carrying capacity! I can weather a few Stern Looks for bee-mounted aerial minotaur cavalry, I think.

JRM

10-15-2008 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9483324)

A great way to increase the use of insects is via Are You Bugged About Something? in Dragon 174. Amongst other abilities, there is the massive strength, metal laced exoskeletons (which is somewhat true), senses and resistance to toxins.

The strenght section was esp interesting- a giant bumblebee can lift more than 50 tons (if a man sized version can lif 50 tons, then a larger species should be able to lift more). Use that for hornets and wasps and they could be elephan predators.

Only if you ignore the square-cube rule. The author clearly didn't allow for the fact that tiny creatures are much stronger because they've got more cross-sectional area in proportion to their volume. If you magically shrink a human down to the size of an ant and leave all their physiological efficiency intact they'd likely be stronger than

said ant.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9483324)

Oxygen exchange is just one of several problems for large arthropods. They would need some chemical much stronger than chitin to get to the size of the ants in Them!.

Plus gigantic land arthropods would collapse in a dying heap while moulting (Euryperids got away with it because they're aquatic, so had water to support their weight after shedding their old skin).

Not to mention that they'd need lots of anatomical changes for their metabolism to work at the levels that AD&D giant insects imply - new hearts and guts as well as new lungs. That's just to walk about and digest food well enough to compete with ground reptiles and mammals. I dread to think what nature would need to do to the insides of an 8' long wasp to allow it to fly in an Earth-type atmosphere.

DMH

10-15-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9485678)

Only if you ignore the square-cube rule. The author clearly didn't allow for the fact that tiny creatures are much stronger because they've got more cross-sectional area in proportion to their volume. If you magically shrink a human down to the size of an ant and leave all their physiological efficiency intact they'd likely be stronger than said ant.

??

Uh, why not just scale up their abilities and make giant insects cooler? Or, why don't you read my response on giant beetles with wings upthread.

noisms

10-15-2008 11:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9485678)

If you magically shrink a human down to the size of an ant and leave all their physiological efficiency intact they'd likely be stronger than said ant.

Now there's an idea for a campaign. The Incredible Shrinking Adventurers. Or Honey, I Shrunk the Dwarf!

noisms

10-15-2008 11:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

By the way, I think the Insect entry has officially generated the most traffic for this thread. I wouldn't have predicted that at the beginning.

DMH

10-16-2008 12:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

It helps there are at least 3 entomologists (professional or amateur) posting about it. Though I wonder if the hydra or crabman entries have been longer.

David J Prokopetz

10-16-2008 12:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9486305)

Though I wonder if the hydra or crabman entries have been longer.

If only we had an obscure Latin plural to quibble about.

DMH

10-16-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Or we could quibble over some of the misinformation in the first post on insects.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9472097)

Ant, Giant - There are worker and soldier varieties, plus a queen with 10 HD. The No. Appearing is only 1-100, which suppose it would have to be in the interests of maintaining a sensible game world. Imagine if a Giant Ants' nest was as populous as an ants' nest is in real life - millions upon millions of the buggers stripping the world of all its nutrient until it resembled a barren wilderness.

There aren't that many species of ants with huge colonies. That is more of a termite thing. Some ants live in acorns and have less than 10 workers.

Quote:

Bee, Worker and *Bee, Soldier* - You know what these are, I'll wager.

Bumblebee - These too. Again, you have to wonder what the world would be like if the numbers of giant insects matched their real-world counterparts; but a nest apparently only contains 1d6+6 of the things.

There is no such thing as a soldier bee (at least among the honeybees, I don't know about the stingless species). The adults have different jobs in the hive depending on their age and defense is just one amongst several.

Bumbles have smaller colonies than honeybees and a few dozen is average.

And speaking of stingless bees (Meliponini), they would make a great addition. A famous entomologist (Wheeler) got skin on his face burned off by a colony- they have an acidic spit.

Quote:

Fly, Giant Bluebottle and *Fly, Giant Horsefly* - Self explanatory, really.

They missed out by not including bots and screw worms.

Quote:

Termite, Giant Harvester - The neat trick of the termite is to spit kerosene, which blinds victims and can then be ignited to cause more damage.

Kerosene? There are termites that "spit" liquid (nasute soldiers) that act as glue.

And ticks should have been in the spider entry.

Kakita Kojiro

10-16-2008 12:52 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by David J Prokopetz (Post 9486413)
If only we had an obscure Latin plural to quibble about.

Well, there's "Aratha" and "Horax" to quibble over -- "arathae" and "horaces", * perhaps. And "Aspis" would probably go to "aspes".

* wait, is "aratha" singular or plural?

* and, really, "horaxes" sounds like something that Harry Potter should be off collecting.

JRM

10-16-2008 04:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9486097)

??

Uh, why not just scale up their abilities and make giant insects cooler? Or, why don't you read my response on giant beetles with wings upthread.

Because it wouldn't just make things cooler if the DM wants to allow for the ramifications. If you have giant insects' strength scale up as their volume scales as you suggest, so you have bumblebees with the payload capacity of C-17 Cargomasters and then they'd out-power all rhinoceros beetles that are literally "stronger than a speeding locomotive" they'd have a major impact on the environment.

They'd be many times stronger than mammals and reptiles and would outbreed them by several magnitudes as well - they'd wipe out most of the large non-insect fauna in a matter of years. It'd be like the film Them! with the giant ants reinforced by lots of other titanic arthropods, all as strong as superheroes.

JRM

10-16-2008 04:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9486225)

Now there's an idea for a campaign. The Incredible Shrinking Adventurers. Or Honey, I Shrunk the Dwarf!

There was an adventure in a Dungeon adventure (Chadranther's Bane in Dungeon #18) based around a magical orb that shrunk humanoids in a garden to the size of insects.

I've toyed with the idea of having something similar in my campaign, but in reverse - a section of countryside were some magical accident causes all the tiny lifeforms to grow to giant size, but they quickly die if they leave its aura.

If you're into GURPS there's some good material on running a "microhuman" campaign on TBone's GURPS website, particularly **Book 8 of the "GULLIVER" section**.

JRM

10-16-2008 04:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9486515)

*Well, there's "Aratha" and "Horax" to quibble over -- "arathae" and "horaces", * perhaps. And "Aspis" would probabl*

go to "aspes".

* wait, is "aratha" singular or plural?

* and, really, "horaxes" sounds like something that Harry Potter should be off collecting.

If I recall correctly, "Aratha" is singular *and* plural.

JRM

10-16-2008 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9486495)

Or we could quibble over some of the misinformation in the first post on insects.

snip examples

Plus, the AD&D assassin bug has very little resemblance to the real-life version, being a vaguely wasp-like flying insect whose males paralyze humanoids so their females can implant eggs into them. At least that's how I remember them from the original Fiend Folio.

That's a perfectly valid lifestyle for a monstrous fantasy insect, riffing off things like **Ichneumon wasps**. I just wish AD&D called them something different and statted up a giant version of **Reduviidae** as Assassin Bugs.

The Last Conformist

10-16-2008 05:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9485678)

Plus gigantic land arthropods would collapse in a dying heap while moulting (Eurypterids got away with it because they're aquatic, so had water to support their weight after shedding their old skin).

You could have, however, an aquatically moulting giant arthropod that still spends most of its time on land. *Arthropleura* (a milliped-like critter about the size of the largest eurypterids) may have been like this; at least, it was a huge arthropod that left a lot of foot prints on land.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9486515)

And "Aspis" would probably go to "aspes".

Assuming the word to be the same as *aspis* "shield", a word common in the scientific names of armoured

organisms (eg. *Cephalaspis*, an armoured fish), the plural is *aspides*.

DMH

10-16-2008 06:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9487283)

Because it wouldn't just make things cooler if the DM wants to allow for the ramifications. If you have giant insects' strength scale up as their volume scales as you suggest, so you have bumblebees with the payload capacity of C-17 Cargomasters and then they'd out-power all rhinoceros beetles that are literally "stronger than a speeding locomotive" they'd have a major impact on the environment.

I don't understand your objection. Like dragons, orcs, undead, etc., these creatures are optional and an article that enhances their use is a bonus in my book. And how can you mention the environment- it is filled with giants, dragons and other super powered monsters already.

Quote:

They'd be many times stronger than mammals and reptiles and would outbreed them by several magnitudes as well - they'd wipe out most of the large non-insect fauna in a matter of years. It'd be like the film Them! with the giant ants reinforced by lots of other titanic arthropods, all as strong as superheroes.

There are several ways around this- sterile wizard creations, egg and larval predators, reduced fecundity (is that a word?), limitations on habitat, population control by intelligent races, divine controls, diet dependency, hell they could be druid created.

randomgamer8466

10-16-2008 08:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9485678)

Only if you ignore the square-cube rule. The author clearly didn't allow for the fact that tiny creatures are much stronger because they've got more cross-sectional area in proportion to their volume. If you magically shrink a human down to the size of an ant and leave all their physiological efficiency intact they'd likely be stronger than said ant.

Really? Marvel Comics has been brainwashing me with this "proportional strength of an insect/spider" nonsense for so long, I'd developed a species-inferiority complex.

I'm going to take that shrinking potion and go whip some bugs' asses.

noisms

10-16-2008 04:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Intellect Devourer

From the sublime to the ridiculous. Well, the previous entry wasn't really sublime, but this is definitely ridiculous. I'm afraid the Intellect Devourer is where I get off the Psionic Monster Bus. I mean, it's a brain on legs, everybody. A BRAIN ON LEGS.

If you don't know or haven't encountered the Intellect Devourer before, the basic precis (other than IT'S A BRAIN ON LEGS) is that it's a nasty little bugger that lives to hunt down psionic creatures or characters, destroy their brain (devour their intellect, one might say), then implant itself in their head and use the body to hunt for more victims. They are typically raised as 'watch dogs' by Illithids, who also enjoy snacking on the larvae.

The Intellect Devourer is definitely one of those creatures which were thrown in more or less entirely to restore game balance; psionic characters were too powerful and there needed to be a way for DMs to get at them. Hence a creature which can only be hit by +3 or better enchanted weapons, takes only 1 hp of damage per hit even with such weapons, is immune to fire, has a movement of 15, and gives birth to young which are specially geared up to mess with psionics' heads in the worst possible way.

To return to a well-worn theme, I also have to say I find the inclusion of psionic monsters in the MM irksome. I liked the idea of psionics, unlike most, and was even relatively pleased with the execution. But they weren't core rules, and monsters whose use necessitated the purchase of the Psionics Handbook should not have been included in a core book. It was a waste of space, and even as an 11 year old I remember feeling mightily jipped that I couldn't use around 5% of the monsters in the volume.

Rant over! :D

demiurge1138

10-16-2008 04:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I loves me some o' them brain-puppies, yes I do. I think they're sublimely ridiculous.

kelvingreen

10-16-2008 05:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9490254)

If you don't know or haven't encountered the Intellect Devourer before, the basic precis (other than IT'S A BRAIN ON LEGS) is that it's a nasty little bugger that lives to hunt down psionic creatures or characters, destroy their brain (devour their intellect, one might say), then implant itself in their head and use the body to hunt for more victims.

See, and that makes me want to use them. They are ridiculous at first glance, but I think they can work, either by playing up the strangeness, or going for a Body Snatchers approach and attempting some Barkeresque body horror. The idea of the brain of a fallen foe detaching itself and either running away or attacking one of the

heroes seems like something from *The Thing*, if played right. I've often lamented that *D&D* lacks an equivalent to the brilliant Gonchong from *Fighting Fantasy*, but the Intellect Devourer might fit that niche.

6inTruder

10-17-2008 11:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

There's an old D&D painting that I think became one of the tab-sheets for the Forgotten Realms appendix 1 that had like, a Drow woman, a Beholder and some kind of Dwarf all in some odd underwater luxury suite. And I could swear there were rotwiler sized Intellect Devourers in it too. (note: in the MM the ID is like... 6" big)

edit: Huzza!

<http://www.candlekeep.com/images/gallery/beholder.jpg>

JasonK

10-17-2008 11:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Oh! I remember that picture!

It's fucking absurd...

~ jason

g026r

10-17-2008 11:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

It was also the cover to the first ed. sourcebook [FR1: Waterdeep & the North](#)

Crinos

10-17-2008 01:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9493649)

Oh! I remember that picture!

It's fucking absurd...

~ jason

I just love that look of boredom/disgust the beholder has.

It's like he see's the PC's and he's like "Oh bloody hell, I thought I ordered a PRIVATE suite."

David J Prokopetz

10-17-2008 02:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Crinos (Post 9493996)

I just love that look of boredom/disgust the beholder has.

It's like he see's the PC's and he's like "Oh bloody hell, I thought I ordered a PRIVATE suite."

He's not the only one with a look of exasperation, either.

Say what you will about 1E art, but I maintain that half the fun of those sourcebooks is looking at the full page illustrations and trying to figure out what, precisely, they're meant to depict. :D

JRM

10-17-2008 09:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9487684)

You could have, however, an aquatically moulting giant arthropod that still spends most of its time on land. Arthropleura (a milliped-like critter about the size of the largest eurypterids) may have been like this; at least, i was a huge arthropod that left a lot of foot prints on land.

Yes, plus aquatic giant scorpions back in the Silurian period may have been able to venture on land - considering some of these grew up to a yard long, such as **Brontoscorpio**, they'd make effective D&D monsters without having to monkey around with their size.

noisms

10-17-2008 09:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Invisible Stalker

Hooray! Been waiting for this one for a while. Oh, how I chuckled when I turned that page. Is this the most famous (and least funny) designer joke in the history of RPGs? Although I remember feeling good about myself when I first found the 'easter egg' in the MM credits, attributing the Invisible Stalker artwork to Zeb Cook.

Unfortunately the Invisible Stalker itself is one of those nothing-to-write-home-about, quickly-turn-over-the-page monsters. It's really not at all dissimilar to the air elemental, being a creature from the elemental plane of air who is summoned to the prime material plane by a wizard and forced to carry out tasks. (Usually these revolve around 'stalking', as the Stalker has the ability to track a target unerringly provided they stay within a day behind.) Admittedly, Stalkers are slightly more interesting, in that air elementals just have a tendency to go apeshit when summoned,

whereas Invisible Stalkers will try to pervert the caster's commands in more passive aggressive fashion. The example given in the book is a caster asking the Stalker to keep him safe from all harm - whereupon he is whisked away to a secret location on the elemental plane of air with no means to get home - but he is safe! A creative DM could have a lot of fun with that - a similar form of fun to that involved with the interpretation of the wording of *wish* spells.

JRM

10-17-2008 09:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9487761)

I don't understand your objection. Like dragons, orcs, undead, etc., these creatures are optional and an article that enhances their use is a bonus in my book. And how can you mention the environment- it is filled with giants, dragons and other super powered monsters already.

It's a matter of degree, if you scale insects' strength up by volume then going by AD&D strength scaling you'd be giving 3' long giant ants the strength of Titans. They actually work out stronger than titans but Str 25 is the highest the rules allow for.

Thus, I prefer my giant insects to have more "realistic" strengths for an animal of their size - they may be at the high end of the strength/toughness scale, but I don't fancy super-insects.

JRM

10-17-2008 09:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9488214)

Really? Marvel Comics has been brainwashing me with this "proportional strength of an insect/spider" nonsense for so long, I'd developed a species-inferiority complex.

I'm going to take that shrinking potion and go whip some bugs' asses.

Yup, let's run some numbers - say you're a 6' (1830mm) human who can lift his own weight (175 lbs?) who shrinks down to the size of a ¼" (6mm) ant. Going by the square-cube rule your proportional strength will increase by a factor of 288 (72 inches divided by 0.25 inches), so you can lift the equivalent of 50,400 pounds (288 times 175) or some twenty five short tons. I believe that's more than an ant can manage, and remember human body-builders can hoist much greater weights than that.

JRM

10-17-2008 10:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9490254)

Intellect Devourer

I've liked the Intellect Devourer since my first Monster Manual, there was just something about the brain-with-claws that appealed to my sense of the macabre. That said, I don't like how they got devalued in later editions of D&D.

The 1st edition Intellect Devourer had genius intelligence, and there was no mention of them being domesticated animals for illithids. If anything, they would be rivals/threats to the mind flayers - an intellect devourer wouldn't half fancy munching on the the big, juicy brain inside those mauve, tentacled head.

Still, if they did work for illithids they'd make excellent spies/infiltrators - just get an intellect devourer to insert itself into an enemy's skull and the mind flayers have got themselves an instant inside agent.

demiurge1138

10-20-2008 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Invisible stalkers are one of those monsters I use very rarely, because they sit on what I call the "fun divide". They have one real power, invisibility. If the PCs have no way to overcome that obstacle, the players don't have much fun struggling with something they can barely hit. If they can overcome the obstacle, the invisible stalker loses its only real oomph, and it become not fun for the DM to run, just a fighty slog.

That said, I did run one memorable invisible stalker encounter, from a module (Hall of Harsh Reflections from the Age of Worms AP, for those keeping score). The party was moving through a warehouse converted into a doppelganger safe-house, and came across a room comprised mostly of narrow, slippery, rotting balance beams suspended over a moat of diseased, spike-filled water. My players are clever people, and this instantly screamed "TRAP!" to them. It was. There were two invisible stalkers waiting in the room for people to cross, whereupon they'd start pushing them off the beams and onto the spikes below.

So the party ranger sends her animal companion, an eagle, in to investigate. And I describe it something like this: "Angel Feathers (the eagle's name, some video game reference) flies into the room and begins to swoop along its perimeter. It begins to fly back, calling as if to indicate 'all clear'. Not ten feet before it reaches you, however, it stops dead in the air, its neck broken in a single wet snap, as if it ran into an invisible wall. Angel Feathers drops like a stone into the filthy water without making a sound."

You should have seen the looks on their faces. The actual fight wasn't great, though--they picked the two stalkers out with glitterdust and let them rush them, rather than move onto the OBVIOUS TRAP. But at least the intro was neat.

Jack of None

10-20-2008 04:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9490254)

They are typically raised as 'watch dogs' by Illithids, who also enjoy snacking on the larvae.

It seems like you wouldn't want to raise guard animals that you could also eat like popcorn.

One mind flayer with a sweet tooth has a bad day tending the elder brain, and voila, you've lost most of this year's brood.

noisms

10-20-2008 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ixitxachitl

Everybody's favourite pseudo-Aztec-sounding race of evil intelligent manta rays. I'd dearly love to know if these have any sort of basis whatsoever in Mesoamerican mythology or if they just came completely from the twisted psyche of Dave Arneson. Either way, they're undoubtedly one of the coolest/weirdest D&D bad guy races, although the MM picture naturally doesn't do them justice - is that Ixitxachitl *smiling*?

I've always wanted to run a campaign in which there is a lost-Atlantis style city submerged in the ocean. It was built by a race of Cthulu-esque Great Old Ones who long ago (supposedly) disappeared, and in the mean time the city was repopulated by Ixitxachitl, who took to worshiping its mysterious statues, pyramids and obelisks. As they could not read the city's hieroglyphs or understand the true nature of its monuments, they invented a new religion for what they found, with a new pantheon of gods. Over the millenia their numbers swelled and their religion took on a life of its own - so that this new invented pantheon of gods actually *became real*.

Except, it turns out, the Great Old Ones never disappeared. They were just slumbering under the city. And now they are going to return from the depths to crush this upstart pantheon of made-up powers...

JRM

10-21-2008 06:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9503873)

Ixitxachitl

Everybody's favourite pseudo-Aztec-sounding race of evil intelligent manta rays. I'd dearly love to know if these have any sort of basis whatsoever in Mesoamerican mythology or if they just came completely from the twisted psyche of Dave Arneson. Either way, they're undoubtedly one of the coolest/weirdest D&D bad guy races, although the MM picture naturally doesn't do them justice - is that Ixitxachitl smiling?

Look, it's a Chaotic Evil demon-worshiping devilfish that enjoys torture, slavery and human sacrifice. If it's smiling, you should be **worried**.

How is Ixitxachitl culture supposed to work, I wonder. Their civilization must depend almost entirely on their marine humanoid slaves, who they need to build/carve all their lairs, temples, cities et cetera. The write up says slaves are used "to do heavy labor", but these demon rays don't even have hands, so how do they get all the light labour and precision crafts finished? Maybe those flexible "horns" on either side of their mouths are

prehensile.

They may do nasty damage with their barbed tails (3-12), but they're pretty slow swimmers (12") - both mermen (18") and tritons (15") can simply swim away from them, so I'm thinking ixitxachitl must clip their slaves' fins so they can't easily escape.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9503873)

I've always wanted to run a campaign in which there is a lost-Atlantis style city submerged in the ocean. It was built by a race of Cthulu-esque Great Old Ones who long ago (supposedly) disappeared, and in the mean time the city was repopulated by Ixitxachitl, who took to worshipping its mysterious statues, pyramids and obelisks. As they could not read the city's hieroglyphs or understand the true nature of its monuments, they invented a new religion for what they found, with a new pantheon of gods. Over the millenia their numbers swelled and their religion took on a life of its own - so that this new invented pantheon of gods actually became real.

Except, it turns out, the Great Old Ones never disappeared. They were just slumbering under the city. And now they are going to return from the depths to crush this upstart pantheon of made-up powers...

That's got potential. I'm thinking some of the ixitxachitl would start worshipping the Great Old Ones, since CE creatures can be pretty fickle in their favours - especially if they start making sushi of their current pantheon. Then you can have a religious war between their worshippers as well as the gods themselves.

demiurge1138

10-21-2008 09:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Ixitxachitl have been associated variably with the cult of Demogorgon, which is an angle I like. They're freakish enough that a two-headed tentacle-baboon would appeal to them. I'd also probably affiliate them with Dagon, who (in D&D at least) straddles the "Great Old One" and "Demon Prince" niches.

Maybe their tails are prehensile? They could hold things in their head-claspers and hold the tool in their tail for precision work.

kelvingreen

10-21-2008 05:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Or perhaps (gasp) they're a truly alien culture, and have no need for fine crafts. Perhaps all their artworks are writ large on vast slabs of basalt beneath the ocean waves.

TavishArtair

10-21-2008 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

This is D&D. If you're a race that doesn't have hands, you can substitute for them for most purposes using a dazzling variety of spells and psionic powers. Even if only a few individuals amongst your society, say, one in ten, have these abilities, you probably have enough to get done whatever you really need doing if your race has any sort of fecundity.

Kapten

10-21-2008 05:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Details are the enemies of mystery. Neither the players nor the DM needs to know how the Itx-whatever (difficult name) makes their art objects. They are alien and they are evil, unexplainable architecture makes them more scary and weird.

JRM

10-21-2008 09:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9507535)

Ixitxachitl have been associated variably with the cult of Demogorgon, which is an angle I like. They're freakish enough that a two-headed tentacle-baboon would appeal to them. I'd also probably affiliate them with Dagon, who (in D&D at least) straddles the "Great Old One" and "Demon Prince" niches.

I was going to mention old' baboon-heads, who the devil-rays have been worshiping since 1st edition. I'm assuming they dropped mention of him in the Monstrous Compendium due the 2nd editions shyness about mentioning demon and demon-worship, due to a concern about controversy. The 3.0 versions of Demogorgon reinstated the connection, and Dagon would be a good fit as well going by his latest writeup in Dragon magazine #349.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9507535)

Maybe their tails are prehensile? They could hold things in their head-claspers and hold the tool in their tail for precision work.

I'd thought of the prehensile tail possibility, but felt all those barbs would get in the way of fine manipulation so went for head-claspers instead. Although they could use their mouths/tongues as well. Some rays are skilled at manipulating shellfish with their lips, teeth and tongues, so they can crack them open and eat the good bit while spitting out all the shell. Maybe Ixitxachitl have a highly sophisticated form of this?

JRM

10-21-2008 10:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9508879)

Or perhaps (gasp) they're a truly alien culture, and have no need for fine crafts. Perhaps all their artworks are writ large on vast slabs of basalt beneath the ocean waves.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9508895)

Details are the enemies of mystery. Neither the players nor the DM needs to know how the Itx-whatever (difficult name) makes their art objects. They are alien and they are evil, unexplainable architecture makes them more scary and weird.

To my mind, Ixixachitl should certainly be scary and alien to the players, but not necessarily to the DM, who may want some background framework to decide what their devil-rays are capable of and inclined towards doing. Giving them a sense of weirdness will mostly depend on the DM's presentation in the end, so why not help them out with some background ideas about how a non-human sapient like a devil-ray might live?

As for unexplainable architecture, I'm afraid 2nd edition AD&D's **Monstrous Manual** and the super-adventure **The Night Below** are pretty clear about what ixixachitl architecture is for (dwelling places and temples to demonic entities), and how it's built (lots of slaves). I was a bit disappointed in the Night Below's ixixachitl architecture, it just wasn't strange enough. I'd have liked it to have been some weird twisted creation of basalt and living coral that surface-dwellers would have difficulty recognizing as a city, rather than having easily identifiable ziggurats.

Kapten

10-21-2008 10:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9509502)

To my mind, Ixixachitl should certainly be scary and alien to the players, but not necessarily to the DM, who may want some background framework to decide what their devil-rays are capable of and inclined towards doing. Giving them a sense of weirdness will mostly depend on the DM's presentation in the end, so why not help them out with some background ideas about how a non-human sapient like a devil-ray might live?

My POV is that if I make something logical in my mind, it's still logical to a human being (that is, to me). If I make it bizarre to my mind but still place it there, it will become truly bizarre. In this case, I would let the Ixi:s be violent, unwilling to talk and wail away with their tails. All of this in a backdrop of advanced architecture and art that would make the PCs and players go "how the heck did they make this? They have no hands!"

JRM

10-21-2008 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by TavishArtair (Post 9508884)

This is D&D. If you're a race that doesn't have hands, you can substitute for them for most purposes using a dazzling variety of spells and psionic powers. Even if only a few individuals amongst your society, say, one in ten, have these abilities, you probably have enough to get done whatever you really need doing if your race has any sort of fecundity

Maybe that's the origin of their worship of Demogorgon? About 10% of the Ixixachitl population are priests/clerics. If they're the only ones capable of fine manipulation due to some gift of Demogorgon (prehensile retractile tentacles? a Spiritual Hand spell?) it would have given his cult an enormous advantage.

My other idea was their write-up says the priests can use spells of the Charm school. Perhaps that's how they control the slave population, instead of using brute force? I like the idea that the more powerful priests can Dominate humanoids by wrapping their bodies around them and use the humanoid as a puppet to perform actions the rays are physically incapable of, although maybe that works better as a variant for Psionic or Vampire Ixixachitls.

Now I'm thinking this hypothetical psionic ixixachitl variant developed sound-based mind-influencing powers and telekinetic flight, then left the water and became Cloakers. It'd be nice to have some relationship between the two species, them both being malignant ray-shaped monsters that congregate in mysterious cities.

JRM

10-21-2008 10:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9509513)

My POV is that if I make something logical in my mind, it's still logical to a human being (that is, to me). If I make it bizarre to my mind but still place it there, it will become truly bizarre. In this case, I would let the Ixi:s be violent, unwilling to talk and wail away with their tails. All of this in a backdrop of advanced architecture and art that would make the PCs and players go "how the heck did they make this? They have no hands!"

Well having strange creatures do weird stuff that makes no human sense because they're alien is a perfectly reasonable approach, such as Dragonewts in RuneQuest or the way MAR Barker said Empire of the Petal Throne players shouldn't have alien characters, since they wouldn't be able to roleplay their non-human thinking.

Although it's not for everyone, some DMs like a firmer grasp of the how & why of things, and 2nd edition is probably the edition of D&D that leaned most strongly toward this simulationist style of campaign. 3rd edition was probably more simulationist as a rule-set, but didn't go into much depth as to how a typical D&D world worked, with scant details about monster ecology and the like.

noisms

10-21-2008 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9509569)

Although it's not for everyone, some DMs like a firmer grasp of the how & why of things, and 2nd edition is probably the edition of D&D that leaned most strongly toward this simulationist style of campaign. 3rd edition was probably more simulationist as a rule-set, but didn't go into much depth as to how a typical D&D world worked, with scant details about monster ecology and the like.

From what I gather 4e has gone even further in that direction. I have to say I think both styles have their advantages and disadvantages, but generally speaking I probably prefer the 2e way on balance.

Kakita Kojiro

10-22-2008 12:30 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9503873)

Everybody's favourite pseudo-Aztec-sounding race of evil intelligent manta rays. I'd dearly love to know if these have any sort of basis whatsoever in Mesoamerican mythology or if they just came completely from the twisted psyche of Dave Arneson...

This is the sort of stuff that I think would be very interesting to learn -- Old Geezer occasionally drops some gems from his experiences, but it would be nice to have some resource to go to for this sort of stuff. D&D has been around long enough that I'm surprised *someone* hasn't tried to fill this niche.

Just in this thread(s) we've seen interest in "monster etymology" stuff -- we've talked about monsters taken from folklore, mythology, cheap plastic toys, Fiend Folio zaniness, etc. Throw in some stuff on blunt-weaponed clerics, campaign-derived magic items, and sources for all the harlots on EEG's infamous trollop table, and it'd be a gaming goldmine, methinks.

TavishArtair

10-22-2008 01:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I'm reading through the back of this thread (I originally was reading the earlier threads and about when this one started I left off). I just got through Golems, and I'd like to drop in a bit. Sorry if it has already been said earlier, but if not, here you go. I read this from one of Gary Gygax's discussion threads.

The reason the Clay Golem leaves unhealable damage on its foes is... well, the line was something along the lines of "the clay golem's wounds can only be healed by a 17th level cleric." However, it was intended to be parsed as **the wounds the Clay Golem had**, that is, if you had a cure light wounds spell you could only make it work on the golem if you were that high a level. By misreading and possibly malevolent referees, it was interpreted and rewritten into what it is now today to "clarify" it.

JRM

10-22-2008 05:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by TavishArtair (Post 9510215)

I'm reading through the back of this thread (I originally was reading the earlier threads and about when this one started I left off). I just got through Golems, and I'd like to drop in a bit. Sorry if it has already been said earlier, but if not, here you go. I read this from one of Gary Gygax's discussion threads.

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That's a fascinating tit-bit. Did you come across it on the Q&A with Gary Gygax on the dragonsfoot.org fora? I've started reading them, but haven't had time to get very far.

JRM

10-22-2008 06:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9509892)

This is the sort of stuff that I think would be very interesting to learn -- Old Geezer occasionally drops some gems from his experiences, but it would be nice to have some resource to go to for this sort of stuff. D&D has been around long enough that I'm surprised someone hasn't tried to fill this niche.

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Well Mr Geezer is supposed to be working on a rpg.net column on this very subject, so we can just hope he hurries up and does so.

As for the origins of the name Ixixachitl, I have seen no evidence one way or the other. My suspicion is that the monster doesn't have any mythological precedent, but that's nothing more than gut feeling and a failure to find any folklore beasts of a similar name with a few casual internet searches, so it's hardly conclusive.

TavishArtair

10-22-2008 06:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9511160)

That's a fascinating tit-bit. Did you come across it on the Q&A with Gary Gygax on the dragonsfoot.org fora? I've started reading them, but haven't had time to get very far.

Ah, yes, that's probably the one. I could never remember it. But yes, the reason the Clay Golem was written the way it was, was mostly bad editing. Although, I suppose someone COULD have been drunk when it was edited...

kelvingreen

10-22-2008 08:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9509502)

To my mind, Ixitxachitl should certainly be scary and alien to the players, but not necessarily to the DM, who may want some background framework to decide what their devil-rays are capable of and inclined towards doing. Giving them a sense of weirdness will mostly depend on the DM's presentation in the end, so why not help them out with some background ideas about how a non-human sapient like a devil-ray might live?

I agree completely. It's very helpful to imagine how the alien devil ray might live. And while I like the idea of the slaves just fine, it would disappoint me to see it used to explain why the Ixitxachitl might have human-like arts and crafts; with a lack of prehensile limbs, and the limited visibility of the deep, small and intricate works seem far less likely than vast bombastic artistic statements. Why even attempt to create fiddly baubles when you could instead carve a massive statue of your god that is recognisable in silhouette from leagues away?

Kakita Kojiro

10-22-2008 09:57 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9511214)

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In the absence of any other provenance, my guess has always been that the name is probably some kind of horrible pun in Nahuatl, or something. Just because that seems to be the way that gamers come up with stuff.

noisms

10-22-2008 11:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by TavishArtair (Post 9510215)

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Heh. The DM who thought to twist things that way must have been some kind of insane genius.

noisms

10-22-2008 11:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9512155)

In the absence of any other provenance, my guess has always been that the name is probably some kind of horrible pun in Nahuatl, or something. Just because that seems to be the way that gamers come up with stuff.

Legend of the Five Rings was unrivalled in that regard.

kami2awa

10-22-2008 06:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9509544)

Maybe that's the origin of their worship of Demogorgon? About 10% of the Ixixachitl population are priests/clerics. If they're the only ones capable of fine manipulation due to some gift of Demogorgon (prehensile retractile tentacles? a Spiritual Hand spell?) it would have given his cult an enormous advantage.

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Now I'm thinking this hypothetical psionic ixixachitl variant developed sound-based mind-influencing powers and telekinetic flight, then left the water and became Cloakers. It'd be nice to have some relationship between the two species, them both being malignant ray-shaped monsters that congregate in mysterious cities.

Mind control would make sense; after all, without any limbs they would otherwise have a hard time preventing slaves escaping, or getting them in the first place.

Kapten

10-22-2008 06:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9513236)

Mind control would make sense; after all, without any limbs they would otherwise have a hard time preventing slaves escaping, or getting them in the first place.

Threats of violence would work fine. They could swim up to a community and demand a bunch of slaves. If they don't get the slaves they kill everyone in the community. The same can be said for escaping slaves; the ixis know where they caught the slave, the slaves can be informed that their families/communities will be destroyed if they escape. That kind of thing worked pretty well for the USSR, I bet the ixis can pull it off as well ;).

JRM

10-22-2008 07:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9513257)

Threats of violence would work fine. They could swim up to a community and demand a bunch of slaves. If they don't get the slaves they kill everyone in the community. The same can be said for escaping slaves; the ixis know where they caught the slave, the slaves can be informed that their families/communities will be destroyed if they escape. That kind of thing worked pretty well for the USSR, I bet the ixis can pull it off as well ;).

Yes, but, as I previously pointed out, many of the marine humanoids Ixixachitl enslave have higher swim speeds than they do so what's to stop them just swimming away when the lookout sees the devil-rays coming? Not to mention that this assumes the communities are fixed, I get the impression a lot of aquatic sapients live a nomadic life (especially the Sea Caballeros, obviously ;)).

JRM

10-22-2008 07:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9511899)

I agree completely. It's very helpful to imagine how the alien devil ray might live. And while I like the idea of the slaves just fine, it disappoints me that it's there to explain why the Ixixachitl might have human-like arts and crafts; with a lack of prehensile limbs, and the limited visibility of the deep, small and intricate works seem far less likely than vast bombastic artistic statements. Why even attempt to create fiddly baubles when you could instead carve a massive statue of your god that is recognisable in silhouette from leagues away?

Erm, the official explanation of Ixixachitl slaves is that they're to do heavy labour like construction, and serve as sacrificial victims. The fine arts and crafts is just wild speculation on our part.

I imagine the demon-rays would use fine manipulation to make torture instruments, practice alchemy, enchant magical items, shape little golden idols of demogorgon and the like, but they wouldn't need it for day-to-day services as much as surface dwellers do. They don't wear clothes or use weapons and likely treat doctor injuries with priest-spells rather than surgery. Similarly, I suspect they eat live prey so don't usually prepare or preserve food, unless they consider torture as being food preparation - which is quite likely!

Kapten

10-22-2008 09:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9513401)

Yes, but, as I previously pointed out, many of the marine humanoids Ixitxachitl enslave have higher swim speeds than they do so what's to stop them just swimming away when the lookout sees the devil-rays coming? Not to mention that this assumes the communities are fixed, I get the impression a lot of aquatic sapients live a nomadic life (especially the Sea Caballeros, obviously ;)).

Those are valid points; the scare- tactics will work against stationary tribes of sea humanoids. Also, even if they are slower, they can ambush and it's possible that the children of the victims will be slower than the Ixis.

I don't say mindcontrol is out of the picture, but I don't like the thought of an evil empire that doesn't use scare tactics, terror and bullying ;).

Maybe a combination: The Ixitxachitl charm one, say, sea elf and use that sea elf to lure other sea elves into an ambush. They cut the fins of the captives, making them slower and put them to work. If they repeat this procedure often enough they create a paranoia within sea elf communities so that they can make an offer the sea elves can't refuse; give the Ixitxachitl slaves or the Ixitxachitl won't stop harassing them.

Since the sea elves then can chose who they give up as slaves, it can work into sea elf justice; criminals will be given to the Ixitxachitl as a sort of capital punishment.

JRM

10-23-2008 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9513641)

Those are valid points; the scare- tactics will work against stationary tribes of sea humanoids. Also, even if they are slower, they can ambush and it's possible that the children of the victims will be slower than the Ixis.

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Well sea elves wouldn't be a very suitable victim for the Ixitxachitl, the other marine humanoids don't have 90% resistance to *Charm* spells, near invisibility and unconstricted travel in kelp forests, elvish eyesight able to spot foes from miles away et cetera.

Considering the alternatives, Koalinth (marine hobgoblins) may be a frequent victim, they've got a slow swim speed (12") and aren't as tough as Tritons (3 HD) or Locathah (2 HD), and being Lawful Evil they'd be more willing to hand over unwanted relatives to extorting demon-rays than the good-aligned marine sapient would be, nor would the latter be likely to hurry to aid them in battle against the Ixixachitl.

kelvingreen

10-23-2008 02:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9513431)

Erm, the official explanation of Ixixachitl slaves is that they're to do heavy labour like construction, and serve as sacrificial victims. The fine arts and crafts is just wild speculation on our part.

Badly phrased on my part, I apologise. I've fixed it now.

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Jackalwere

Out with the Is, in the with Js. I love the Jackalwere picture - in fact it's one of my favourite non-Diterlizzi pieces in the MM. The staring yellow eyes are great.

A Jackalwere is like a Wolfwere, but with Jackals. Simple enough. A monster which can take on the form of a Jackal, humanoid Jackal, or human, and uses its wily intelligence, claws, and *sleep* causing gaze to kill and eat humans and demihumans. There is a rather nice grisly line: "In some cases, a jackalwere has been known to feed on the bodies of fallen enemies without reverting to its jackal or hybrid form." It makes me wonder about a Jackalwere living hidden amongst a band of ordinary human cannibals for protection.

Jackalweres suffer from the same problem that Wolfweres do: namely player knowledge. It's difficult to successfully trick players with Jackalweres disguised as helpless old women/damsels in distress/friendly merchants lost in the forest, because players have generally been numbed by years of such shinnanegans into complete paranoia. They might not suspect a Jackalwere per se when they find an old woman all alone and caught in a mantrap, but they'll sure as hell suspect *something*. This considerably ruins the surprise effect.

JRM

10-24-2008 02:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9517160)

Jackalwere

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Yes, the obvious answer to that is to have a fair portion of encounters which are helpless old women/damsels in distress/friendly merchants lost in the forest, although that has the unfortunate side-effect of using up a lot of time. It's a similar problem if NPCs frequently cheat or betray the party, resulting in the PCs never trusting anyone. You've got to have a quantity of true coins to hide the bad pennies among.

With jackalweres, I think they work well for an "enemy within" plot. Have the party travel with a group of NPCs (let's say it's a caravan, for the sake of argument) and, unbeknownst to them, a few of their companions are jackalweres plotting to lead the humans to their doom.

Remember that a jackalwere can vary their human disguise at will, so they can use this ability to cover their trail - i.e. one of them could kill and then pretend to be a family's bed-ridden grandmother, then use their sleep-gaze power to overcome its victim's unsuspecting relatives one by one. If they're careful, it may be some time before the travellers even suspect they're being preyed upon - they could find the gnawed bones of a man and not realize it was the guard they set on watch, who appears to be sitting right next to them as right as rain.

One problem is, can jackalweres mimic the speech of a particular human? Gygax's Queen of the Demonweb Pits module indicates that they're capable of human speech. The jackalweres could try to cover up any communication difficulties by pretending to be sick - so a "plague" of fever-victims mumbling incoherently are really jackalweres, and when their loved ones catch the disease they've really been murdered and replaced by other pack members. They could even fake funerals when all the pack-members have infiltrated the caravan and they want to claim another victim.

kelvingreen

10-24-2008 03:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9517160)
a band of ordinary human cannibals

:eek:

I think I've mentioned this before, but I'm quite fond of the obvious-old-lady-jackalwere turning out to be friendly, or at least not actively hostile. The players will be expecting the old lady to be a monster, but not necessarily that the monster is not out to get them.

After all, while disguise is useful in trapping prey, it's also useful in not becoming prey yourself. Perhaps the weres are generally a non-hostile race, who've developed human forms in order to hide from those who hunt them, and the one or two of them who try to kill every human they encounter are merely, to their minds anyway, fighting back.

noisms

10-24-2008 10:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9519402)
one of them could kill and then pretend to be a family's bed-ridden grandmother, then use their sleep-gaze power to overcome its victim's unsuspecting relatives one by one.

Nasty, I like it.

Nathan P. Mahney

10-24-2008 11:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Another option I've seen used is to have Gods walking the Earth disguised as mortals - sort of like in Greek myth. Say the little old lady who wants you to carry her across the river is actually Athena or Hera... But throwing gods up against the PCs is generally frowned upon.

Ratoslov

10-24-2008 11:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9521458)

Another option I've seen used is to have Gods walking the Earth disguised as mortals - sort of like in Greek myth. Say the little old lady who wants you to carry her across the river is actually Athena or Hera... But throwing gods up against the PCs is generally frowned upon.

In myth, if it's a god disguising itself as a mortal, either they're there to personally kill you or they're there for the old slam-bam-thank you ma'am. Usually resulting in you getting turned into a animal by a jealous wife or giving birth to a monster.

Except, of course, for the time you don't respect them, and then they curse you.

Basically, any time the Gods show up, you're fucked.

noisms

10-24-2008 11:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9521517)

Basically, any time the Gods show up, you're fucked.

A good rule of thumb, I think.

demiurge1138

10-24-2008 11:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Three ways to use jackalweres that do not rely on helpless little old ladies in the woods.

1. The party has been sent on the trail of an evil bard, whom it is said uses his magic to knock travellers to sleep, rob them blind, and leave them to be fed upon by wild beasts. Unfortunately, that "bard" is a jackalwere, and parties not expecting a powerful melee combatant, or bringing their cold iron weapons, might be in for a surprise.

2. There's a little roadside tavern on the boundaries of a farming community and the wilderness. The bartender is always polite and engaging, serving drinks while asking about traveler's intentions and destinations. He even helps the soused ones upstairs to a bed to sleep off an evening of too much drink.

The bartender is, of course, a jackalwere, but a canny and patient one. He only kills patrons who have no nearby family to come investigating, travel alone, or are headed off on long voyages with return in the distant future. Nobody gets too suspicious if they're told that ol' Jep decided to get an early start on his journey, after all...

3. This one requires some alignment tweaking, but it's my favorite. Jackalweres are the chosen sons and daughters of Anubis, sent to Earth to ensure that those who are fated to die do so, and are mummified in a way to best preserve them for the afterlife. They serve pharaohs as advisors, military commanders and keepers of the necropoli, almost always in human guise. From these positions of power, they schedule wars, defend tombs, and are on hand to make sure the pharaoh's enemies no longer plague him.

An Anubian jackalwere would be lawful evil. They would use their sleep gaze to nullify their targets before ritually murdering them, perhaps beginning the mummification process while still alive. In necropoli, they would travel with an honor guard of mummies, and some of them might have access to spellcasting as a cleric.

Novatian

10-24-2008 11:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9521619)

3. This one requires some alignment tweaking, but it's my favorite. Jackalweres are the chosen sons and daughters of Anubis, sent to Earth to ensure that those who are fated to die do so, and are mummified in a way to best preserve them for the afterlife. They serve pharaohs as advisors, military commanders and keepers of the necropoli, almost always in human guise. From these positions of power, they schedule wars, defend tombs, and are on hand to make sure the pharaoh's enemies no longer plague him.

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All I can say is "Thank you." This idea must appear in my next campaign.

Littleredfox

10-24-2008 01:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Nathan P. Mahney (Post 9521458)

Another option I've seen used is to have Gods walking the Earth disguised as mortals - sort of like in Greek myth. Say the little old lady who wants you to carry her across the river is actually Athena or Hera... But throwing gods up against the PCs is generally frowned upon.

You could drop the power a couple of levels and do the Russian myth thing.

I.e Mother Volk may be a werewolf but if you don't help her now, she's in a trap [politely mind you] she can't or won't turn out to help you down the road when you need to round up Baba Yaga's carnivorous horses.

Or alternatively just treat being a lycanthrope as another source of power. Paladins pray for strength, Werewolves find it by merging with the beast within, both adventure. the Eagle and Jaguar Knight kits could be considered to be a riff on this sort of thing.

JRM

10-25-2008 03:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 9521517)

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Except, of course, for the time you don't respect them, and then they curse you.

Basically, any time the Gods show up, you're fucked.

Not necessarily, sometimes they turn up to help their favourites, or to test some mortals for worthiness and reward them if they do well, or just steer you down a "path to glory" - although that usually ends badly, you'll probably ride high for at least a while with divine assistance.

If you're really unlucky it's three goddesses who want you to decide which of them is the most beautiful - I've never heard of that ending well.

JRM

10-25-2008 03:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Littleredfox (Post 9522004)

You could drop the power a couple of levels and do the Russian myth thing.

I.e Mother Volk may be a werewolf but if you don't help her now, seh's in a trap [politely mind you] she can't or won't turn out to help you down the road when you need to round up Baba Yaga's carnivorous horses.

Or alternatively just treat being a lycanthrope as another source of power. Paladins pray for strength, Werewolves find it by merging with the beast within, both adventure. the Eagle and Jaguar Knight kits could be considered to be riff on this sort of thing.

Yes, there's good mythological precedence for "warrior weres". It makes an interesting alternative character class for berserker-types and wild druids, although it's not a well supported option in AD&D.

6inTruder

10-25-2008 10:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9521619)

3. This one requires some alignment tweaking, but it's my favorite. Jackalweres are the chosen sons and daughters of Anubis, sent to Earth to ensure that those who are fated to die do so, and are mummified in a way to best preserve them for the afterlife. They serve pharaohs as advisors, military commanders and keepers of the necropoli, almost always in human guise. From these positions of power, they schedule wars, defend tombs, and are on hand to make sure the pharaoh's enemies no longer plague him.

An Anubian jackalwere would be lawful evil. They would use their sleep gaze to nullify their targets before ritually murdering them, perhaps beginning the mummification process while still alive. In necropoli, they would travel with an honor guard of mummies, and some of them might have access to spellcasting as a cleric.

Dude. DUDE! That's fucking brilliant. And totally yonked for the Dragonstar game I want to run!

Wakboth

10-25-2008 05:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9517160)

Jackalwere

Out with the Is, in the with Js. I love the Jackalwere picture - in fact it's one of my favourite non-Diterlizzi pieces in the MM. The staring yellow eyes are great.

Yup, it's creepy as heck!

You're right about the "old lady in trouble" thing, of course. Player paranoia (warranted or not) is a big pain in the ass to deal with, and it's especially frustrating when you as the DM get to reap the effects of another DM's "Screw you for trusting *anything*, mwahahaha!" gaming style...

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9519402)

With jackalweres, I think they work well for an "enemy within" plot. Have the party travel with a group of NPCs (let's say it's a caravan, for the sake of argument) and, unbeknownst to them, a few of their companions are jackalweres plotting to lead the humans to their doom.

[snip ideas]

Damn, that was cool; I especially liked the idea of the "mumbling fever". :)

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9521619)

Three ways to use jackalweres that do not rely on helpless little old ladies in the woods.

Very cool ideas, all of those; the Anubean jackalweres is probably the greatest, but a bit difficult to insert in many campaigns. The "friendly bartender" thing was great... it works especially well, if you manage to make the place a regular watering hole for the adventurers. :D

JRM

10-25-2008 09:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9526681)

You're right about the "old lady in trouble" thing, of course. Player paranoia (warranted or not) is a big pain in the ass to deal with, and it's especially frustrating when you as the DM get to reap the effects of another DM's "Screw you for trusting anything, mwahahaha!" gaming style...

Well the obvious counter-strategy for such players is the " 'Screw you for mistrusting *anything*, mwahahaha!' gaming style...", where the party keep on meeting beautiful princesses lost in the woods, little old lady 18th level magic users who just wanted to hire them for an extravagantly recompensed mission, a monster pleading for aid who's really a Paladin polymorphed by an enemy, et cetera.

Wakboth

10-26-2008 12:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9527039)

Well the obvious counter-strategy for such players is the " 'Screw you for mistrusting anything, mwahahaha!' gaming style...", where the party keep on meeting beautiful princesses lost in the woods, little old lady 18th level magic user who just wanted to hire them for an extravagantly recompensed mission, a monster pleading for aid who's really a Paladin polymorphed by an enemy, et cetera.

True... or you might sit down with the players and tell them: "Guys, you're being ridiculous about this. I'm not trying to screw with you; I'm not your enemy. If you help somebody, and it turns out they're a monster, I'm not going to play it as a 'gotcha' and kill you all in your sleep, okay?"

noisms

10-26-2008 10:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9527389)

True... or you might sit down with the players and tell them: "Guys, you're being ridiculous about this. I'm not trying to screw with you; I'm not your enemy. If you help somebody, and it turns out they're a monster, I'm not going to play it as a 'gotcha' and kill you all in your sleep, okay?"

And then kill them all in their sleep.

Brandi

10-26-2008 04:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9527389)

True... or you might sit down with the players and tell them: "Guys, you're being ridiculous about this. I'm not trying to screw with you; I'm not your enemy. If you help somebody, and it turns out they're a monster, I'm not going to pla it as a 'gotcha' and kill you all in your sleep, okay?"

Or have it turn out that sure, they're monsters-- but they actually **want** the party's help to stave off something worse (IIRC, this is part of the Saltmarsh module series' premise).

JRM

10-26-2008 10:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9529558)

*Or have it turn out that sure, they're monsters-- but they actually **want** the party's help to stave off something worse (IIRC, this is part of the Saltmarsh module series' premise).*

That's the one with the Lizardmen who the PCs may decide to help against an evil(er?) foe, isn't it? The Neutral monsters may be friend or foe approach can work quite well.

Sometimes it's more effective presenting the players with an obvious monster they doesn't have a simple solution (i.e. they can't just kill it and take its stuff) rather than a hidden monster for a "gotcha" moment. I've long wanted to have a PC encounter a really evil CE creature who falls madly in love with them - maybe it drank a Philter of Love at just the wrong time - but is powerful enough that trying to slay it would be dangerous, but it keep following them about and "helping" its beloved. This may be useful down the dungeon, but when it kills the Innkeeper after the PC complains about the bill and murders people who look like they may be rivals for its affections the drawbacks will become obvious. For added sadism, the monster that wants this amorous relationship may be something particularly hideous, like a Glabrezu or Otyugh.

Actually, this whole "D&D heroes solve problems by killing things" is something I like to take an occasional break from, maybe the Ultimate Evil is a noblewoman, and they'd all be executed if they've implicated in her death, so they have to bring her down via other means.

Brandi

10-27-2008 05:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9530036)

That's the one with the Lizardmen who the PCs may decide to help against an evil(er?) foe, isn't it?

Yep. There's also a Ravenloft mini-adventure where

Spoiler: from Children of the Night: The Created

sim_james

10-27-2008 10:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9530036)

Sometimes it's more effective presenting the players with an obvious monster they doesn't have a simple solution (i.e. they can't just kill it and take its stuff) rather than a hidden monster for a "gotcha" moment.

I had fun with this kinda deal in a Planescape game.

The PCs had found themselves in one of the Lady of Pain's Mazes (I was trying to run a "dungeon" for them that was significantly different from a standard dungeon). One of the inhabitants was a CE tanar'ri (a Molydeus? Something nasty) with genius-level intelligence that had deduced the only gatekey to escaping the Maze - true and permanent conversion to an opposite alignment.

For centuries the tanar'ri had attempted to corrupt other beings that entered the Maze, but that didn't work very well (due to other alignment-related stuff going on in there). So in the end it decided to become Lawful Good itself.

If you can't see the fun potential in a powerful demon *trying* to act in a LG fashion, but not having the real motivation to do so... you're probably not a GM. ;)

glass

10-27-2008 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9533779)

For centuries the tanar'ri had attempted to corrupt other beings that entered the Maze, but that didn't work very well (due to other alignment-related stuff going on in there). So in the end it decided to become Lawful Good itself. lj

you can't see the fun potential in a powerful demon trying to act in a LG fashion, but not having the real motivation to do so... you're probably not a GM. ;)

That sounds cool. How did it play out?

glass.

noisms

10-28-2008 11:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Kenku

I don't know how anyone can fail to love the Kenku. In fact I'm going to go out on a limb and say they're one of my top 10 favourite MM monsters. Possibly top 5. They're one of the very, very few creatures designed to be mysterious and elusive which actually succeed in being so. As somebody who likes the tricky, capricious nature of fairy tale creatures, I appreciate the Kenku for being one of the very few D&D creatures which actually seem like they could be from a fairy tale.

Kenku are like a race of unseen symbiants living in parallel with human society, with no motivations that can be fathomed. They can cloak themselves in invisibility at will, disguise themselves as humans, and create a kind of fool's gold which disappears after a day. This allows them to live alongside human society without ever revealing themselves for what they are - unless they choose to. They're also utterly unpredictable. Most of the time they appear helpful, and might pretend to act as guides or give advice, but there is no way of knowing whether information they give will lead to profit or harm, or whether it is true or false.

Perhaps what's best about the Kenku entry is that it doesn't contain any of the references to sages to which we have become accustomed; there are no heavy-handed hints about origins or motives. The creatures are a blank slate for a creative DM to do whatever he wants with: Why are the Kenku here? Why do they do what they do? What is their secret purpose, if any? Are they the servants of some god, or are they just a nuisance? You have a free rein to decide.

David J Prokopetz

10-28-2008 11:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've never used kenku in my games, but I recall that there was a cynical, blisteringly sarcastic kenku as a recruitable NPC in the AD&D computer game *Menzoberranzan*. He was one of the high points of an otherwise thoroughly mediocre game.

Kakita Kojiro

10-28-2008 12:52 PM

In a weird bit of gaming circularity, D&D's *kenku* was taken from Japan's [tengu](#) legends. (a somewhat valid alternate pronunciation, from what I understand).

Then, L5R used "kenku" for its tengu-equivalents. And they (logically enough) had much more in common with the D&D kenku than the Japanese tengu -- even though L5R cribs from Japanese folklore. Weird.

demiurge1138

10-28-2008 01:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I just came to a weird realization.

I had thought, for the longest time, that the Monstrous Manual was very strange in having stats for both tengu and kenku, filling about the same niche.

I just looked it up, and nope. No tengu in the MM.

I'm very confused right now.

JRM

10-28-2008 05:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9537236)
I just came to a weird realization.

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I just looked it up, and nope. No tengu in the MM.

I'm very confused right now.

AD&D has not one, but two sorts of tengu, just not in the Monster Manual. They first appeared in the 1E Oriental Adventures, the 2E version are in the Kara Tur Monstrous Compendium (MC6).

Getting back to kenku, I've liked them since the original Fiend Folio and they've crop up now and again in my campaign, but I have never seen a D&D scenario where they're much more than incidental encounters. The closest I can think of a major villain kenku is the Age of Worms, isn't there a high-level kenku assassin in one of the adventures? Even that is just a "threat of the week".

Oh, and how many of you remember the little photo-cartoon in the back of an Imagine Magazine with a DM (I think it was Carl Sargent) running an encounter with kenkus, it went something like this:

(panel one) DM: "Seven kenku jump out and attack!"
(panel two) DM: (obviously rolling dice behind his DM's screen)
(panel three) DM: "Take a hundred and thirteen points of damage."
(panel four) DM (looking offended): "Of course those were genuine rolls."

Classic D&D, it always gave me a giggle when I read that issue - although you'd need to see the photographs for the full effect. Oh, and I did some calculations and it was *barely* possible for the kenkus to do that much damage before the player's could respond, assuming they won surprise, initiative and rolled brilliantly on all their claw-claw-bites.

kelvingreen

10-28-2008 06:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9536740)

Kenku

I don't know how anyone can fail to love the Kenku. In fact I'm going to go out on a limb and say they're one of my top 10 favourite MM monsters. Possibly top 5.

Yeah, me too. There's something brilliant about the mysterious bird monk-scholars. *Fighting Fantasy* had them too, in the Hamakei, but they were accompanied by all the sage garbage which stripped them of their mystery. Shame.

(un)reason

10-28-2008 10:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

And after spending more than half the thread on the G's, we slip over J like a greased monkey. I knew that the last few letters and Q only had a few each, but I forgot just how underrepresented J is.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9536740)

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I don't know how anyone can fail to love the Kenku. In fact I'm going to go out on a limb and say they're one of my top 10 favourite MM monsters. Possibly top 5. They're one of the very, very few creatures designed to be mysterious and elusive which actually succeed in being so. As somebody who likes the tricky, capricious nature of fairy tale creatures, I appreciate the Kenku for being one of the very few D&D creatures which actually seem like they could be from a fairy tale.

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I do have to say I'm quite fond of kenku as well. They show up the neutral as standoffish and purely self-interested side of amorality, and very much have their own best interests at heart. Plus they're one of those creatures that punches above their weight because their powers can be applied cleverly. (shapeshifting plays a big part in this, as ever.) Kobolds might be the classic "play them cleverly and terrify the high level characters" monster, but kenku really are brilliant in that role.

demiurge1138

10-29-2008 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9537810)

Getting back to kenku, I've liked them since the original Fiend Folio and they've crop up now and again in my campaign, but I have never seen a D&D scenario where they're much more than incidental encounters. The closest I can think of a major villain kenku is the Age of Worms, isn't there a high-level kenku assassin in one of the adventures? Even that is just a "threat of the week".

Yeah, but 3e kenku are totally different beasts. They're anthropomorphic crows, cursed into winglessness by Pazuzu, who live in cities as scavengers, thieves and assassins. I'm actually a big fan of them--even played one in a very short-lived piratical campaign. But shapeshifting magical tricksters, they're not.

kelvingreen

10-29-2008 07:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9538425)

Kobolds might be the classic "play them cleverly and terrify the high level characters" monster

When we get to the kobold entry, I'd like to know more about this.

Nathan P. Mahney

10-29-2008 11:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Mostly I remember Kenku from Eye of the beholder. Never did figure out why so many of the bastards were running around in Undermountain.

sim_james

10-29-2008 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by glass (Post 9534013)

That sounds cool. How did it play out?

Well...

The Maze wasn't a traditional labyrinth or subterranean structure. Each "room" appeared to be an endless plain; the PCs appeared in an area between four free standing arches. Of course, these were portals leading to other rooms.

The layout of these "rooms" resembled the Great Wheel. It wrapped (like Asteroids) but imperfectly so (it wasn't possible to walk through an arch in A1 to reach A3; you'd get to B3 instead). Whilst this is a fairly simple layout on paper, in play it had the players a bit confused, thus creating a Maze-like feel.

Each of the four "neutral" rooms (NG, LN, CN, NE) featured some kind of artefact or supernatural effect that had some unexpected connection to the alignment in question (eg, the NG room featured an enormous pillar of flame; when a PC stepped into it and was incinerated, he reformed afterwards wearing phoenix feathers). Each of the four "extreme" rooms (LG, LE, CE, CG) had a sentient being associated with that alignment (I think it was an insane archon, an imp and his dead wizard, a tanar'ri, and an eladrin tulani). The central, true neutral room had an oracular woman (Centre of All) trapped inside a thousand overlapping circles (like a messy Venn diagram).

So that's the set-up. The PCs didn't visit every "room", but they fought the imp, saw one PC get incinerated and reborn by the phoenix flame, got messed up by the heart of chaos, saw the Dustman gain Wisdom from the Empty Mirror, met the eladrin (which they saw as a satyr-like being), and "befriended" the tanar'ri. The PCs recognised very quickly that it badly outclassed them should things come to a fight, but that it didn't seem to *want* a fight. Instead, it followed them (or just communicated telepathically from a distance) suggesting "lawful good" ways to deal with problems.

What a creature of murder, betrayal and malice understands about law and good is rather twisted, of course. And that freaked the PCs out a lot more than just meeting a tanar'ri normally would (they were kinda open-minded about fiends).

How the PCs resolved the scenario (and escaped the Maze) was by deducing what the oracular Centre of All was talking about (that the gate key was "walking the circle") and that the satyr-like fellow had a limited ability to change reality for other beings (he could grant a *wish*). Realising that the tanar'ri was trying but failing to become lawful good, they got him into the same room as the tulani, encouraged an impassioned conversation about alignment, and prompted* the tanar'ri to verbally express his wish that he could become lawful and good.

The tulani granted the unwitting *wish*, the portals all activated (allowing anybody who wished to leave the Maze a chance to do so), and the PCs escaped back to Sigil. They never found out what happened to the LG molydeus.

* They didn't trust the tanar'ri enough to tell him that the tulani could grant a *wish*, rightly fearing that its treacherous nature might make that temptation too much to resist.

noisms

10-31-2008 07:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9543074)
Well...

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** They didn't trust the tanar'ri enough to tell him that the tulani could grant a wish, rightly fearing that its treacherous nature might make that temptation too much to resist.*

Great stuff.

New post coming shortly everyone. I spent the last two days on various planes, so I've had no net access.

JRM

10-31-2008 10:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9551532)
Great stuff.

New post coming shortly everyone. I spent the last two days on various planes, so I've had no net access.

Yes, I heard only Mechanus has a decent internet service. :p

noisms

11-01-2008 12:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9551790)
Yes, I heard only Mechanus has a decent internet service. :p

The Abyss has dial-up. ;)

JRM

11-01-2008 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9552349)
The Abyss has dial-up. ;)

Yes, and you have to spin the numbers manually using a dial made from red-hot metal.

Brantai'sPuppet

11-01-2008 06:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9553273)
Yes, and you have to spin the numbers manually using a dial made from red-hot metal.

And the only modem they have is an acoustic coupler, so the screams are constantly interfering with your connection.

DMH

11-01-2008 07:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9552349)
The Abyss has dial-up. ;)

Actually it has numatic (sp?) tubes driven by the last breath of murderers and screams of the damned.

And no, I didn't come up with that- it is in the pact system download for the Secondworld Sourcebook. It has an abyss based mad science group that uses the tubes to keep in contact.

David J Prokopetz

11-01-2008 08:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

There's an obvious "series of tubes" joke in that, but I've already received my "vicious beating" quota for this week. :p

Epoch

11-01-2008 08:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9553788)
umatic (sp?)

Pneumatic.

I hear that the internet *is* a series of tubes....

HaplessVictim

11-01-2008 05:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9536740)

Kenku

I don't know how anyone can fail to love the Kenku.

I love the Kenku. I had a.. formative DM'ing experience involving these lovelies.

One of the first large adventures/campagins of my own invention that I DM'd began in a small town, near the foothills of a dry mountain range where Kenku were known to live. The initial plot hook involved a nearby cave (I know, I know..) that reportedly contained an ancient brass door that hadn't been opened in living memory. The players hear of this and of course investigate. Unbeknownst to them, this cave-system is the home of a poor but numerous tribe of Kenku , a race whom the players had never encountered, only heard stories of.

Because they hadn't asked around town and found out to avoid it, the players spend the night camped out in the Kenku ceremonial stone circle. The first encounter with a Kenku patrol at dawn went predictably badly. They then advanced on the caves, less interested in role-playing and parlaying than killing the bird people and taking their stuff. They manage to surprise the lone guard, but once inside they are mobbed by furious Kenku soldiers and slaughtered to a single man, the fighter, who turned tail and ran.

Rolling up new characters, the players refused to re-enter the caves. My whole campaign, which hinged on the characters opening that damn door, had lasted about two hours.

P.S. Thanks for reminding me of this 20 year old AD&D session, noisms. I registered here because of this thread. Ah good times.

JRM

11-01-2008 08:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 9555326)

Because they hadn't asked around town and found out to avoid it, the players spend the night camped out in the Kenku ceremonial stone circle. The first encounter with a Kenku patrol at dawn went predictably badly. They then advanced on the caves, less interested in role-playing and parlaying than killing the bird people and taking their stuff. They manage to surprise the lone guard, but once inside they are mobbed by furious Kenku soldiers and slaughtered to a single man, the fighter, who turned tail and ran.

Rolling up new characters, the players refused to re-enter the caves. My whole campaign, which hinged on the characters opening that damn door, had lasted about two hours.

Sounds like you compounded a few of the classic DM mistakes - a whole campaign revolving around the PCs doing one thing, with no allowance for if the PCs refused to do it, or their preferences (kill everything and take their stuff!) contradicted the approach was likely to work (parlaying). I'm guessing it may have been salvageable if you and the players wanted to, just by putting in some side-trek adventures or a "mini adventure path" so that the new PCs got enough levels under their belt so they could return to those caves and wreak revenge.

HaplessVictim

11-02-2008 02:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9555509)

Sounds like you compounded a few of the classic DM mistakes

Oh, precisely. That's why it was formative, although I couldn't have articulated what went wrong at the time as well as you did, I learned my lesson.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9555509)

I'm guessing it may have been salvageable if you and the players wanted to, just by putting in some side-trek adventures or a "mini adventure path" so that the new PCs got enough levels under their belt so they could return to those caves and wreak revenge.

As I recall, the DM rotation went to another member of our group for a while and we ran Barrier Peaks. I don't think we ever re-did my campaign or they ever found out what was behind that door (riches and glory, I'd imagine).

JRM

11-03-2008 02:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 9556303)

Oh, precisely. That's why it was formative, although I couldn't have articulated what went wrong at the time as well as you did, I learned my lesson.

Nothing wrong with that, I doubt I'd have been able to clearly see where I went wrong if I'd done something similar back when I was starting out as a DM.

Of course, now that I'm a seasoned veteran I have developed deeply sophisticated methods of ruining my campaigns, instead of these neophyte errors. ;)

Anyhows, betting back on topic: Come on Noisms, we're waiting for the Ki-rin!

noisms

11-03-2008 04:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Kirin

Hot on the heels of the Kenku is another pseudo-Japanese/Chinese mythological creature, the Kirin. (Kirin is also the Japanese word for a giraffe, as well as being a brewery of tasty alcoholic drinks.) It's not nearly as fun or interesting though - possibly because the horror of a picture that accompanies the entry sucks all the life and fun out of it. As is often the case, there is a Planescape version of the illustration that is approximately 8 billion times better.

A Kirin is a sort of four-legged, furry, horse-like version of Superman: a flying goody-goody who goes around fighting evildoers and righting wrongs. In D&D terms it's a typical Mary Sue monster: When the PCs do something wrong the Kirin is a way for the DM to discipline them; when they aren't powerful enough the Kirin is a way for the DM to help them; and when they need a quest out of the blue the Kirin is a way for a DM to give one to them. As such, I don't much like it, and find it hard to use in a game.

Perhaps their most interesting quality is their ability to create essentially infinite amounts of food, drink and other items. For some reason I want to imagine a Kirin as a kind of moveable logistics camp for a lawful good army, ready to create extra rations and weaponry at a moment's notice. But that's just ridiculous and I'm not sure why it seems so attractive.

Our friends the sages are not mentioned explicitly, but their presence is felt in the line "Only the males ever approach the ground. No encounter with a female ki-rin has ever been recorded, although it is certain such beings exist." It doesn't mention why it is certain. On reading this, my mind immediately threw up a great heap of sheer wrongness: Kirinwives and the quest to find them.

There is one more item of note: a Kirin's skin is worth 25,000 gps, but "possession of such a item is dangerous, due to the retribution that may be visited upon the possessor by other ki-rin, sympathetic humanoids, or intelligent lawful good monsters." Adventure to recover a slain Kirin's skin, anybody?

sim_james

11-03-2008 11:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

Perhaps their most interesting quality is their ability to create essentially infinte amounts of food, drink and other items. For some reason I want to imagine a Kirin as a kind of moveable logistics camp for a lawful good army, ready to create extra rations and weaponry at a moment's notice. But that's just ridiculous and I'm not sure why it seems s attractive.

It could be handy. A kirin is a passable stand-in for Aslan in AD&D; being able to *feed* the resistance that you're guiding would be helpful.

You could even do a loaves-and-fishes scene to reinforce the Crystal Dragon Jesus aspect of the whole thing.

Five Eyes

11-03-2008 11:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I've never had much use for most of the "power player" monsters such as the Ki-rin or high-ranking planar beings; I've never had players encounter that level of "heat" for anything that they've done. Mostly, they come forth as parts - i.e., powerful magic items are made out of components from powerful beings. Ki-rin have shown up, but only as components in coats of arms - to show the high status of the family in question, etc.

Wakboth

11-03-2008 04:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

Perhaps their most interesting quality is their ability to create essentially infinte amounts of food, drink and other items. For some reason I want to imagine a Kirin as a kind of moveable logistics camp for a lawful good army, ready to create extra rations and weaponry at a moment's notice. But that's just ridiculous and I'm not sure why it seems s attractive.

Because it's the good sort of ridiculous that melds smoothly into awesome? :)

"Ours is the Mandate of Heaven! Now eat your K-rations, and let's go trash some villains!"

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

Kirin

Our friends the sages are not mentioned explicitly, but their presence is felt in the line "Only the males ever approach the ground. No encounter with a female ki-rin has ever been recorded, although it is certain such beings exist." It doesn't mention why it is certain. On reading this, my mind immediately threw up a great heap of sheer wrongness: Kirinwives and the quest to find them.

Female ki-rin were filled in in one of the planescape supplements. They're depressingly similar, only even more insanely powerful. Definitely a case of wasted potential there. My own pet theory had the females be some chaotic evil creature, and ki-rin sex become a deeply embarrassing negotiation process that both sides only put up with to get more kids of their own gender, and treachery and infanticide being common in the child-raising process.

JRM

11-04-2008 07:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

Kirin

A Kirin is a sort of four-legged, furry, horse-like version of Superman: a flying goody-goody who goes around fighting evildoers and righting wrongs. In D&D terms it's a typical Mary Sue monster:

Is it a bird!? is it a horse!? is it a unicorn!? ... is it what you get when a hollyphant and rhinoceros mate!!?

Yes, I guess the Mary Sue-ishness (or rather Gary Sue-ishness, if all 2E AD&D Ki-rin encountered are male) is part of the reason I never used them. I guess you could come up with scenarios where the Ki-rin doesn't overwhelm the party's role (high level PCs, rescue the helpless Ki-rin, quest to summon the Ki-rin to defeat the Big Bad Demon et cetera)? Another reason I've never used the monster is I didn't get a sense of personality from their write-up apart from "Excessively Lawful Good", like some of AD&D's other good-aligned mythological human-herd animal hybrids like the Shedû, Lammasu etc. All three of these creatures are divine beings in their original folklore, which intervene to protect/aid people against evil, so it really depends how much Heavenly Intervention you like in your games.

Hmm, according to Chinese legend Ki-rin only appear in areas under a benevolent leader, to bless the virtuous, or to protect good people by punishing the wicked. Could that first bit have AD&D applications? Say, a country where a Ki-rin appears to approve its newly crowned rulers, but one Evil Prince creates a fake Ki-rin to pretend to have heaven's mandate, while getting the real Ki-rin who was coming to bless his rival Prince's bid for the crown petrified.

Now, Coatl and Unicorns are more to my tastes as far as good supernatural monsters go, not so "Deus ex machine", I'd even use the wackier ones like Baku and Hollyphant in preference to a Ki-rin, since they strike me as offering more potential as interesting characters, at least as described in their official AD&D write-ups.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

Perhaps their most interesting quality is their ability to create essentially infinite amounts of food, drink and other items. For some reason I want to imagine a Kirin as a kind of moveable logistics camp for a lawful good army, ready to create extra rations and weaponry at a moment's notice. But that's just ridiculous and I'm not sure why it seems so attractive.

Yes, but according to their write-up Ki-rin can only create food and beverages once a day for 2d12 people. Also, AD&D Ki-rin "sustain themselves by creating their own food and drink" and they're bigger than most elephants [Huge 13'], so logically they should need to consume most, if not all, of the food they can create assuming that "people" means "an average human".

Incidentally, I suspect the reason they only eat magically created food is to remove the risk of them harming a living thing. The legendary Kirin was such a peaceful creature it would take great care not to tread on any living creature - it would step on the ground so lightly that it would not damage a blade of grass - and only ate herbs, never meat.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9559780)

There is one more item of note: a Kirin's skin is worth 25,000 gp, but "possession of such a item is dangerous, due to the retribution that may be visited upon the possessor by other ki-rin, sympathetic humanoids, or intelligent lawful good monsters." Adventure to recover a slain Kirin's skin, anybody?

Isn't there a story about a Kirin's skin having healing powers, or am I getting it mixed up with another mythological beastie? In Jessica Amanda Salmonson's book ***The Golden Naginata*** the titular implement was a magical weapon that a Kirin carried within its horn, that the book's heroine was charged to cut off in order to reinforce the emperor's authority. However, I don't think that had any basis in legend, except for a minor parallel with the legend of the sword Grasscutter (**Kusanagi**) being found in a dragon's tail.

JRM

11-04-2008 07:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9562546)

Female ki-rin were filled in in one of the planescape supplements. They're depressingly similar, only even more insanely powerful. Definitely a case of wasted potential there. My own pet theory had the females be some chaotic evil creature, and ki-rin sex become a deeply embarrassing negotiation process that both sides only put up with to get more kids of their own gender, and treachery and infanticide being common in the child-raising process.

Sounds like a job for the Girdle of Masculinity/Femininity.

"Noble Ki-rin, the good news is we've found a way for you to perpetuate your kind without consorting with the Evil Ones. The bad news is one of you will have to sacrifice his horns."

"Horns, Oh esteemed sages? But we only have one horn."

"We're not just talking about the one on you forehead.":o

Five Eyes

11-04-2008 07:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Hmm, according to Chinese legend Ki-rin only appear in areas under a benevolent leader, to bless the virtuous, or to protect good people by punishing the wicked. Could that first bit have AD&D applications? Say, a country were a Ki-rin appears to approve its newly crowned rulers, but one Evil Prince creates a fake Ki-rin to pretend to have heaven's mandate, while getting the real Ki-rin who was coming to bless his rival Prince's bid for the crown petrified.

This plays out in the anime adaptation of Twelve Kingdoms, sort of. The ki-rin in that are adversely affected by violence and blood, so it's subdued at first by a good deed of blood being dropped on it (if I'm remembering right.)

To riff on the "imprisoned Ki-rin" used to justify a false mandate, then, the Ki-rin is kept captive, fed only meat (violating its desire to avoid causing harm and keeping it subdued/weakened), and is trotted out for special occasions. In a particularly brutal LE regime, it might even be public knowledge that the Ki-rin is a captive - it's a sign of their nation's strength, which is such that it does not have to submit meekly to the will of Heaven.

(un)reason

11-04-2008 09:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9564589)
Sounds like a job for the Girdle of Masculinity/Femininity.

"Noble Ki-rin, the good news is we've found a way for you to perpetuate your kind without consorting with the Evil Ones. The bad news is one of you will have to sacrifice his horns."

"Horns, Oh esteemed sages? But we only have one horn."

"We're not just talking about the one on you forehead.":o

Hee. This is of course dependent on psychology not being dependent on physiology, which as polymorph spells showed back then, was very much not the case in D&D. (This of course ties in with all the controversy about D&D creatures having inherent morality from birth.) You adopt the form, you start thinking like them pretty quickly.

noisms

11-04-2008 05:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Five Eyes (Post 9564610)

To riff on the "imprisoned Ki-rin" used to justify a false mandate, then, the Ki-rin is kept captive, fed only meat (violating it's desire to avoid causing harm and keeping it subdued/weakened), and is trotted out for special occasions. In a particularly brutal LE regime, it might even be public knowledge that the Ki-rin is a captive - it's a sign of their nation's strength, which is such that it does not have to submit meekly to the will of Heaven.

Very cool. How is the Kirin kept captive in the first place, though? Perhaps a hostage female or baby?

David J Prokopetz

11-04-2008 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9566280)

Very cool. How is the Kirin kept captive in the first place, though? Perhaps a hostage female or baby?

Perhaps forcing it to subsist on "polluted" food is enough to restrain its powers. Ever see *The Golden Child*?

JRM

11-05-2008 12:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9565039)

Hee. This is of course dependent on psychology not being dependent on physiology, which as polymorph spells showed back then, was very much not the case in D&D. (This of course ties in with all the controversy about D&D creatures having inherent morality from birth.) You adopt the form, you start thinking like them pretty quickly.

Ha! You cannot think to defeat the sages so easily. Know you not of the *Helm of Reverse Alignment*. :cool:

noisms

11-06-2008 05:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read]AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Gi-Z(?)]

I'll start a new thread before the SINISTER POWERS THAT BE shut down this one for being too long.

noisms

11-06-2008 05:17 AM

[Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Part 3. Will this be the final installment of our epic trek? Let's see.

Kirre

I'd forgotten all about the Kirre - and it's easy to see why, because it's quite a forgettable beastie; really all it is is a glorified psionic tiger with horns and six legs. It has no special abilities beyond what is suggested by that: lots of attacks per round (7) and some psychic blast type things.

In fact it's really a rather anticlimactic way of beginning this third section of the thread. Hopefully things will be looking up tomorrow, when Kobolds rear their ugly little heads.

In the mean time, seeing as how we're now over half way through the MM, a poll based on a broadly representative smattering of popular entries.

6inTruder

11-06-2008 06:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

GAH! Fucking Dark Sun monsters shouldn't be IN the basic MM!! They could'a put in the Flumph and it'd'a been better!

edit: Oh yeah, and I chose Gnoll, because of my idea with the Flinds being the females of the species. Which I still rather like.

DMH

11-06-2008 07:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Out of that bunch, the carrion crawler. I like the ankheg and feyr, but they don't invoke that visceral horror the crawler does.

And where is the deepspawn?

6inTruder

11-06-2008 10:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Actually, I'd be inclined towards the Anubian Jacklewere too. But only one vote...

So... Bollocks to the Kirre and on to the KOBOLD!

Dr. Prunesquallor

11-06-2008 10:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What, no Ixixachitl?

Gnolls, all the way. Hyena-headed half-man carrion-eaters, what's not to love?

Kakita Kojiro

11-06-2008 10:40 AM

I'll just assume "Hobgolin" is the same as sea caballero, and vote for that, eh? ;)

demiurge1138

11-06-2008 11:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The kirre pisses me off. Why?

1) It has a gore attack. That's cool. But then why do its horns face backwards, where they can't actually poke at anybody?

2) The flavor-text mentions that it is a favored game animal for many peoples in Athas' jungles. No wonder everybody is starving on that planet. Don't feed only on top carnivores, people! There's not much nutrition in 'em!

kami2awa

11-06-2008 04:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9575517)
The kirre pisses me off. Why?

1) It has a gore attack. That's cool. But then why do its horns face backwards, where they can't actually poke at anybody?

Many really animals with backward-pointing horns can gore people. It just requires that the animal can get its head down far enough.

Wakshaani

11-06-2008 08:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Heck, it's a magical critter ... teh horns might be able to unfurl, like a birthday party noisemaker, to impale someone as well.

Bonus points if it makes the same sound. :)

Just wanted to say, here, that I missed alllll ove rthe old threadstuff and have been just recently reading and jotting

ideas like a crazy person. These threads are *gold* and I'm thrilled to finally be in on the ground floor of one. (Just past the Carrion Crawler, currently.) ... Long, LONG pile of reading yet to go, but, you'll have my nutburger self contributing from here on out.

Wakboth

11-06-2008 08:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Gnolls for the win! :)

And yeah, kirre is a disappointing monster. I'm sure they had more interesting critters with wider applicability in other settings in *Dark Sun*, so why on Athas did they go with something this lame?

This sort of "one monster from setting X, one monster from Y, and ten monsters from Z, with half the information needed to run them missing" thing is the biggest problem with the 2e MM. It really betrays its origins as a collection of monsters from several Monstrous Compendiums.

Ah well, the kobolds will be cool. :)

noisms

11-06-2008 11:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9576643)

*Just wanted to say, here, that I missed alllll ove rthe old threadstuff and have been just recently reading and jotting ideas like a crazy person. These threads are *gold* and I'm thrilled to finally be in on the ground floor of one. (Just past the Carrion Crawler, currently.) ... Long, LONG pile of reading yet to go, but, you'll have my nutburger self contributing from here on out.*

Welcome aboard. I have promised to pdf-ize the whole thing once it's done, so hopefully that'll make things easier to catch up on.

randomgamer8466

11-06-2008 11:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I voted Carrion Crawler, because The Carrion Crawlers is the name of my band in Rock Band.

HaplessVictim

11-07-2008 12:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I voted beholder out of respect. Ain't nothing more old school and deadly than a huge, magical, flying eyeball that eats you.

demiurge1138

11-07-2008 12:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9576240)

Many really animals with backward-pointing horns can gore people. It just requires that the animal can get its head down far enough.

Yeah... but can they snap their heads down far enough to gore and then snap them back up to bite within... oh, six seconds? If the kirre got a special charging attack with its horns and had the rest of its natural weapons on a normal attack, it'd be fine, but attacking with both backwards horns and a bite in the same round has it whipping around like it was headbanging.

Inyssius

11-07-2008 12:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I don't know how psionics work in Dark Sun, but the kirre might need less food than you might expect. If it's capable of sustaining itself mostly via its own psychic powers (like mind flayers), that would make it a pretty excellent animal to hunt--you get more food out of it than you put in.

Wakboth

11-07-2008 02:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9577501)

Yeah... but can they snap their heads down far enough to gore and then snap them back up to bite within... oh, six seconds? If the kirre got a special charging attack with its horns and had the rest of its natural weapons on a normal attack, it'd be fine, but attacking with both backwards horns and a bite in the same round has it whipping around like it was headbanging.

2e melee rounds were 1 minute in length (and every attack was assumed to involve several feints, blows and such), so this isn't really a problem.

sim_james

11-07-2008 07:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

One vote for the kenku.

You never know how many kenku are *watching you right now*.

noisms

11-07-2008 09:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9577577)

I don't know how psionics work in Dark Sun, but the kirre might need less food than you might expect. If it's capable of sustaining itself mostly via its own psychic powers (like mind flayers), that would make it a pretty excellent animal to hunt--you get more food out of it than you put in.

The solution to the world's hunger problems: Kirre.

Actually the only psionic powers they have are of the psychokinetic and telepathic variety. I think the food creation powers are in the psychometabolic school.

kelvingreen

11-07-2008 09:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, I voted for the Kenku. Got to love those feathered sages!

YojimboC

11-08-2008 12:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My mom says hobgoblins are cool.

Five Eyes

11-08-2008 12:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The best use I can think of for a Kirre is as some sort of gladiatorial beast - like, as a replacement for normal animals, more powerful/renowned gladiators have to fight naturally-psionic, semi-intelligent relatives.

In a CS where psionics is relatively unknown, or presents a potent threat to most parties, having the party be sent to "round up" a slew of some of the many "Normal beastie + psionics" for a local colloseum could be fun, especially if the party's not entirely certain what the beasts can do.

Gnolls, of course.

JRM

11-08-2008 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9575365)

I'll just assume "Hobgolin" is the same as sea caballero, and vote for that, eh? ;)

Ay Caramba! The Sea Caballeros thank you for your support, despite you conflating them with those scourges of the sea, the Koalinh.

JRM

11-08-2008 06:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9575517)

The kirre pisses me off. Why?

1) It has a gore attack. That's cool. But then why do its horns face backwards, where they can't actually poke at anybody?

2) The flavor-text mentions that it is a favored game animal for many peoples in Athas' jungles. No wonder everybody is starving on that planet. Don't feed only on top carnivores, people! There's not much nutrition in 'em!

I had no memory of this creature being in the Monstrous Manual at all. Maybe psionic eight-legged horned tigers just aren't interesting enough to stick in the mind. Anyhows, regarding your points:

1) Yes, being able to gore and bite in the same round used to bother me about gargoyles with their claw/claw/bite/horn routine, Even if they have a whole minute to use both attacks, realistically they'd be better off trying to strike with their horns or fangs twice rather than switching between them, but that's just the way the AD&D melee round works.

...Although I do like the idea of headbanging psionic eight-legged horned tigers. Kirre are sapient after all, and sages say that even dumb beasts can enjoy music. Now I'm imagining them shaking their stuff to ***Eye of the Tiger***.*

(2) To be fair, the 2E MM description says that Kirre are favoured game because they're particularly tasty. That doesn't necessarily mean that they're a major source of food for the Athasian hunting tribes, they're more likely to be prestigious prey items.

*EDIT: Speaking of eyes, the MM illustration shows a Kirre with blue eyes, but the accompanying description says "The **yellow** eyes of this creature against the dark grey fur of its face create a fearsome appearance." It's not the first illo-text inconsistency in the Monstrous Manual, and I suspect it won't be the last.

Mulling it over, I think I prefer Kirre with blue eyes. Gives them a spooky air, like those creepy Persian cats so beloved of superspy Nemeses like Blofeld.

noisms

11-09-2008 08:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Kobold

Here they are. Everybody's favourite whipping boys. Indeed, it's my theory that kobolds are the most commonly encountered D&D monsters - more frequently found even than orcs or goblins. That's because they're the easiest fodder for 1st level characters, who orcs or hobgoblins can easily be too tough for in numbers.

Like probably everybody I like kobolds. I do however recognise that there's something odd going on with their makeup: why is there such ambivalence about whether they're little dog creatures or little reptilian creatures? There is definitely a place for little dog humanoid creatures in D&D, so why they muddled the waters with the scaly skin is a bit of a mystery.

Some interesting points to note:

- Kobolds attack gnomes on sight, and will not either take them prisoner or even eat them. I wonder if there was ever a justification for the gnome v. kobold idea, other than an attempt to make gnomes seem more interesting?
- Kobolds will generally not attack humans, elves or dwarves unless they outnumber them by 2 to 1, and even then will not attack until they have softened up their opponents with missile attacks. There's plenty of scope for sneaky attritional tactics.
- A favourite tactic is to drop poisonous insects on enemies from murder holes when in their dens. In all my years of playing D&D I don't think I've ever used, or encountered, monsters dropping poisonous insects on people - but I will now. As always, you have to regret the fact that there are no greatly detailed rules for different kinds of natural poisons in AD&D.
- Kobolds also apparently hate goblins, not just gnomes and pixies and the like; there are 'numerous' kobold-goblin wars, which dwarves appreciate for keeping their numbers down.

Urd

Urds are a bit like the flind to the kobold's gnoll, except with wings. They are a tougher, more intelligent, nastier version, who like to drop rocks from above.

Wakshaani

11-09-2008 08:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Tucker's Kobolds pretty much redefined the entire *concept* of humanoid monsters for me, from "Faceless mooks" ala "10' by 10' room with an orc and a chest" to "Actual thinking, feeling opponents. And they have a plan."

I can't say enough good things about them!

Adventure hooks generally come out of the 3.5 version, with clerics and sorcerers and Draconic lineage, but, we don't have that here, aside from the Bird... pardon ... Urds, who have wings.

But there's that Gnome hate.

Perhaps, as trapmakers, Kobolds just detest the idea of 'cheating' with magical illusions, which Gnomes are famous for? In ancient history, they were friendly races who shared a common love for pranks, but, a huge contest for one-upmanship on trapmaking and prank-crafting turned on Gnomes busting out mad illusion skills and the Kobolds, feeling betrayed, declared neverending war?

kelvingreen

11-09-2008 08:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9586776)

Kobold

Here they are. Everybody's favourite whipping boys.

And now I get to ask:

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9538425)

Kobolds might be the classic "play them cleverly and terrify the high level characters"

Tell me more! I'm fascinated.

Kakita Kojiro

11-09-2008 09:11 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9586776)

- Kobolds attack gnomes on sight, and will not either take them prisoner or even eat them. I wonder if there was ever a justification for the gnome v. kobold idea, other than an attempt to make gnomes seem more interesting?

Presumably it is a sly wink to their mythical antecedents -- both kobolts and gnomes being little folk associated with underground, mining, etc.

In-game, of course, it got mythologized to a feud between Garl Glittergold and Kurtulmak, which I've always thought was a nice riff (much like the tiff between Groomsh and Corellon Larethian).

Wakshaani

11-09-2008 10:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9586829)
And now I get to ask:

Tell me more! I'm fascinated.

Back in the Olde Days, before the idea of "Monsters with CLASSES?!" took off, there was a Dragon Magazine article about a DM named Tucker and his Kobolds. These Kobolds weren't skittery lil' yapping guys who ran away at teh first sign of trouble and died in droves to a 3rd level party. No, TUCKER'S Kobolds were kitted out with posioned arrows, fired in fusilades from hollow walls and murder holes. They'd trigger pit traps beneath a party then rain Green Slime on them while they were in teh hole, or rig a door to lockafetr being entered, then push a 10' tall pile of burning debris ahead of them with metal 10' poles until eventually they pinned the adventuring team between a cold hard wall of rock and a 10' by 10' pile of burning wood, pressed until dead.

They were every nightmare story of a Vietnam Vet's come to life, sneaky bastards, full of hate, and they woul dkill you just because you were taller than they were.

(quick websearch)

Ahh, here we go!

Ladies, gentlemen, and newbies, let me present to you the very first bonified *revolution* in monster encounters... Tucker's Kobolds.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Dragon Magazine #127
Tucker's kobolds

This month's editorial is about Tucker's kobolds. We get letters on occasion asking for advice on creating high-level AD&D® game adventures, and Tucker's kobolds seem to fit the bill.

Many high-level characters have little to do because they're not challenged. They yawn at tarrasques and must be forcibly kept awake when a lich appears. The DMs involved don't know what to do, so they stop dealing with the problem and the characters go into Character Limbo. Getting to high level is hard, but doing anything once you get there is worse.

One of the key problems in adventure design lies in creating opponents who can challenge powerful characters. Singular monsters like tarrasques and liches are easy to gang up on; the party can concentrate its firepower on the target until the target falls down dead and wiggles its little feet in the air. Designing monsters more powerful than a tarrasque is self-defeating; if the group kills your super-monster, what will you do next? "send in its mother? That didn't work on Beowulf, and it probably won't work here.

Worse yet, singular supermonsters rarely have to think. They just use their trusty, predictable claw/claw/bite. This shouldn't be the measure of a campaign. These games fall apart because there's no challenge to them, no mental stimulation - no danger.

In all the games that I've seen, the worst, most horrible, most awful beyond-comparison opponents ever seen were often weaker than the characters who fought them. They were simply well-armed and intelligent beings who were played by the DM to be utterly ruthless and clever. Tucker's kobolds were like that.

Tucker ran an incredibly dangerous dungeon in the days I was stationed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. This dungeon had corridor that changed all of your donkeys into huge flaming demons or dropped the whole party into acid baths, but the

demons were weenies compared to the kobolds on Level One. These kobolds were just regular kobolds, with 1-4 hp and all that, but they were mean. When I say they were mean, I mean they were bad, Jim. They graduated magna cum laude from the Sauron Institute for the Criminally Vicious.

When I joined the gaming group, some of the PCs had already met Tucker's kobolds, and they were not eager to repeat the experience. The party leader went over the penciled map of the dungeon and tried to find ways to avoid the little critters, but it was not possible. The group resigned itself to making a run for it through Level One to get to the elevators, where we could go down to Level Ten and fight "okay" monsters like huge flaming demons.

It didn't work. The kobolds caught us about 60' into the dungeon and locked the door behind us and barred it. Then they set the corridor on fire, while we were still in it.

"NOOOOOO!!!" screamed the party leader. "It's THEM! Run!!!"

Thus encouraged, our party scrambled down a side passage, only to be ambushed by more kobolds firing with light crossbows through murder holes in the walls and ceilings. Kobolds with metal armor and shields flung Molotov cocktails at us from the other sides of huge piles of flaming debris, which other kobolds pushed ahead of their formation using long metal poles like broomsticks. There was no mistake about it. These kobolds were bad.

We turned to our group leader for advice.

"AAAAAAGH!!!" he cried, hands clasped over his face to shut out the tactical situation.

We abandoned most of our carried items and donkeys to speed our flight toward the elevators, but we were cut off by kobold snipers who could split-move and fire, ducking back behind stones and corners after launching steel-tipped bolts and arrows, javelins, hand axes, and more flaming oil bottles. We ran into an unexplored section of Level One, taking damage all the time. It was then we discovered that these kobolds had honeycombed the first level with small tunnels to speed their movements. Kobold commandos were everywhere. All of our hirelings died. Most of our henchmen followed. We were next.

I recall we had a 12th-level magic user with us, and we asked him to throw a spell or something. "Blast 'em!" we yelled as we ran. "Fireball 'em! Get those little @#+\$%&!!!"*

"What, in these narrow corridors?" he yelled back. "You want I should burn us all up instead of them?"

Our panicked flight suddenly took us to a dead-end corridor, where a giant air shaft dropped straight down into unspeakable darkness, far past Level Ten. Here we hastily pounded spikes into the floors and walls, flung ropes over the ledge, and climbed straight down into that unspeakable darkness, because anything we met down there was sure to be better than those kobolds.

We escaped, met some huge flaming demons on Level Ten, and even managed to kill one after about an hour of combat and the lives of half the group. We felt pretty good, but the group leader could not be cheered up.

"We still have to go out the way we came in," he said as he gloomily prepared to divide up the treasure.

Tucker's kobolds were the worst things we could imagine. They ate all our donkeys and took our treasure and did everything they could to make us miserable, but they had style and brains and tenacity and courage. We respected them and loved them, sort of, because they were never boring.

If kobolds could do this to a group of PCs from 6th to 12th level, picture what a few orcs and some low level NPCs could do to a 12th-16th level group, or a gang of mid-level NPCs and monsters to groups of up to 20th level. Then give it a try. Sometimes, it's the little things used well that count.

Roger E. Moore

Let me add, here, that 6th level was fairly big back then and double-digit levels were nearly unheard of. I *never* saw a legit game go past 12th level (That'd be about 34th in 3rd edition terms!), so, you should realize

how BIG this sort of thing was.

demiurge1138

11-09-2008 10:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ahh... kobolds. Love those little guys. Love them so much, I ran an entire campaign based on them--a prehistoric world where all of the races were reptilian. Kobolds were the Empire, with loads of oppression, bureaucracy, and getting bigger races to do most of the fighting for them.

The first mastermind villain of the first dungeon I ever wrote was a kobold. Kojark was a kobold sorcerer who, for kicks, would give adventuring parties cursed items, then invite them to test themselves in his castle (built within the skull of a dead god) to see if they were worthy enough to give it back. The whole scenario was something very much akin to a Gygaxian ludicrous dungeon, full of unfair monsters, ridiculously deadly traps and sheer goofiness, written by someone (me) who'd never seen a Gygaxian dungeon in his life. It was deliriously fun, and people who played in it occasionally try to get me to convert it and run it again, but I think the joy would be lost.

(un)reason

11-09-2008 05:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9586829)
And now I get to ask:

Tell me more! I'm fascinated.

To expand on the tuckers kobolds editorial, another excellent example of this was the megadungeon classic Dragon Mountain. There, your primary foe was an entire mountain full of various tribes of kobolds, each with their own distinctive sets of tactics. (although all made heavy use of type E poison, which is the great equalizer, which combined with natural 20's always hitting, made them dangerous to adventurers no matter how tough they were.) The combination of these tactics were more than enough to be a challenge to 10th-15th (the expected party level) PC's, but also allowed for a dungeon that was hard but doable (if your characters played things similarly smart) for a far wider level range than usual. If you managed to make it through the dungeon, the dragon played on this, essentially saying if you had so much trouble with kobolds, how do you think you'll fare against a Great Wyrms Dragon, puny mortals? Rather demoralising. :D

Essentially, the big lesson here is that raw power counts for less than you think, if you can't ever get into a position to properly apply that power. If you control the battlefield, get good equipment, and work together properly, you can take on giant monsters which could swat you in a single hit and win. It's something that is integral to the success of humans in the real world, but it works just as fine against us if we forget to apply those lessons, and just wade in with swords swinging and no plan other than attack till they die. And Kobolds have become the ideal means to apply that lesson.

JRM

11-09-2008 06:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9587798)

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The closest equivalent in 3rd edition D&D I can think of is MonkeyGod's ***The Hero Snare***, also starring Kobolds. There's also a Dungeon magazine adventure which does something similar with goblins in a mine, but not so mercilessly. Unless my memory fails me it was Tallow's Deep in Dungeon #18. I actually started running that one for my players but they gave up and left after a couple of sessions, one of them complained they wanted to adventure in a place he could stand up without hitting his head on the ceiling.

Once upon a time I played around with ideas as to how to play the "Killer Kobold" game when the kobold's live on the surface, in one of the "overgrown forests" they are noted as inhabiting in their Monstrous Manual's Habitat/Society. It would have been a bit trickier for them to adapt the terrain to suit them than in a dungeon, since movement would be less constricted for the enemy - and remember, Kobolds move more slowly (6") than most adventures, so I had to adapt the equalizers to things like:

- The Kobolds are ruled by shamans, who have a Crystal Ball they use to watch for enemies approaching their town/village, and who use bat familiars and trained bats to send messages to co-ordinate their defense.
- The first time the adventurers know they've entered Kobold territory is when a couple of the kobold's elite scouts sneak into the camp and try to slit the throats of their sleeping companions.
- Lots of traps in the forest - deadfalls, spiked pits, punji stakes, arrows-snares, snares. All the jungle war film clichés.
- The traditional Kobold fighting style relying on ambushes with massed missile fire, flaming oil, green slime flasks and poison. Then running away before the adventures can do much damage to them. Obviously, they flee through a passel of the previously mentioned jungle death-traps, which are primed behind them.
- More numerous trained beasts - and the Kobold chief and his guards *ride* those boars and giant weasels into battle!
- When they do get to the Kobold's lair they see the traditional pair of 6'+ tall doors. Obviously, it's a trap. The real entrances are hidden trapdoors so small even a fat Kobold may have trouble squeezing through them.

kelvingreen

11-09-2008 07:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

So, essentially, "weak but very clever" covers it. Interesting.

DMH

11-09-2008 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Cessna's mother (another poster here) did something similar to MERP using orcs. I'll PM him for the details.

YojimboC

11-09-2008 10:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Even knowing about Tucker's kobolds (I don't think I ever saw that editorial before, but it was a popular topic in *Dragon's* Forum when I first started reading that magazine), I never really used kobolds. Half a hit die? No thanks. I turned to the goblin races for cannon fodder.

I think I've encountered more kobolds playing *Balder's Gate* than I ever did playing AD&D.

JRM

11-09-2008 11:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9588158)

Even knowing about Tucker's kobolds (I don't think I ever saw that editorial before, but it was a popular topic in Dragon's Forum when I first started reading that magazine), I never really used kobolds. Half a hit die? No thanks. I turned to the goblin races for cannon fodder.

I think I've encountered more kobolds playing Balder's Gate than I ever did playing AD&D.

Yes, the 1d4 hit points is a big problem with Kobolds and Goblins, especially with the early edition rules on fighters multiple attacks against weak foes. I was thinking of avoiding that by introducing a strain of Killer Kobolds with two or more 1d4 Hit Dice (2-8 hit points, attack as 2HD monsters). Maybe they'd been interbreeding with Urds, which have 2d8+ Hit Dice?

But then I'm cruel.

Kaiten

11-10-2008 01:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Holy Hell, I'd forgotten all about Urds. Kobolds that fly? Yes please!

JohnBiles

11-10-2008 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9586776)

Kobold

- Kobolds attack gnomes on sight, and will not either take them prisoner or even eat them. I wonder if there was ever a justification for the gnome v. kobold idea, other than an attempt to make gnomes seem more interesting?

Gnomes and Kobolds are competing for exactly the same ecological niche and thus are pretty much doomed to inevitable conflict since one race tends good and the other evil.

(Now I have the sudden idea of Kobolds as the 'Drow' to the Gnomes, the way Duergar and Derro are for Dwarves...)

Wakboth

11-10-2008 05:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9586776)

Kobold

Here they are. Everybody's favourite whipping boys. Indeed, it's my theory that kobolds are the most commonly encountered D&D monsters - more frequently found even than orcs or goblins. That's because they're the easiest fodder for 1st level characters, who orcs or hobgoblins can easily be too tough for in numbers.

I don't know; in 2e, we probably slaughtered more goblins than kobolds. That 1d4 hp was a bit *too* wimpy...

Quote:

[*]A favourite tactic is to drop poisonous insects on enemies from murder holes when in their dens. In all my years of playing D&D I don't think I've ever used, or encountered, monsters dropping poisonous insects on people - but I will now. As always, you have to regret the fact that there are no greatly detailed rules for different kinds of natural poisons in AD&D.

That was a neat little detail; not because of its efficiency, but because of what it implied of kobolds. :)

Anyway, Tucker's kobolds (which really worked only because of GM fiat and the general tendency of GMs not to use good tactics with humanoid enemies) aside, I think these little buggers really started to shine with 3e. The thing that appealed to me about kobolds was the obvious "height envy", and the nasty, trap-making character. In my mind, kobolds were not just vicious little runts like goblins; they had a sense of humor and they indulged it whenever they had the chance.

Of course, the kobold jokes and pranks were generally only funny for the kobolds... :D

Wakshaani

11-10-2008 08:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Modern Kobolds also have the HUGE advantages of havingc lass levels, so, you get Kobold Rogue trapmakers, Kobold Clerics (Of Tiamat!), and, of course, Kobold Sorcerers... lil' bastards tossing vollies of Magic Missiles through murderholes is just ... arrrrg.

sim_james

11-10-2008 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JohnBiles (Post 9588963)

(Now I have the sudden idea of Kobolds as the 'Drow' to the Gnomes, the way Duergar and Derro are for Dwarves...)

If so, do gnomes have some kind of draconic heritage that nobody knows about?

Or were the ancient ancestors of the kobold gnome half-dragons whose blood has been thinned over the millennia?

Wakboth

11-10-2008 03:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JohnBiles (Post 9588963)

(Now I have the sudden idea of Kobolds as the 'Drow' to the Gnomes, the way Duergar and Derro are for Dwarves...)

It's interesting that the gnomes are, as far as I can tell, the only demihuman race whose Underdark version isn't evil. Duergar are LE killjoys, derro are insane, and we all know about the drow... yet the svirfneblin are just standoffish, nothing worse.

demiurge1138

11-10-2008 04:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There are, actually, deep halflings. Everybody forgets about them, and I'm not sure if they have any precedent before the 3e Monster Manual. Much like svirfneblin, they're just sort of grumpy and isolationist, not evil.

noisms

11-10-2008 08:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9589517)

Modern Kobolds also have the HUGE advantages of havingc lass levels, so, you get Kobold Rogue trapmakers, Kobold Clerics (Of Tiamat!), and, of course, Kobold Sorcerers... lil' bastards tossing vollies of Magic Missiles through murderholes is just ... arrrrg.

True, although it isn't THAT hard to create tougher Kobold chiefs, shamans, mages and the like with 2nd edition rules. Just give them a few extra hit dice and access to a couple of spells.

noisms

11-10-2008 08:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9590414)

It's interesting that the gnomes are, as far as I can tell, the only demihuman race whose Underdark version isn't evil. Duergar are LE killjoys, derro are insane, and we all know about the drow... yet the svirfneblin are just standoffish, nothing worse.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9590508)

There are, actually, deep halflings. Everybody forgets about them, and I'm not sure if they have any precedent before the 3e Monster Manual. Much like svirfneblin, they're just sort of grumpy and isolationist, not evil.

The underdark versions of halflings and gnomes seem utterly pointless to me. People complain enough as it is that there's little to distinguish gnomes and dwarves, and the sverfneblin are even more dwarf-like than their above-ground cousins. And by taking halflings and making them "grumpy and isolationist" they basically removed everything uniquely halfling and turned them into weaker, less interesting dwarves.

sim_james

11-10-2008 09:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

True. I think that if I were to use an Underdark halfling race, I'd place them in a vast cavern lit by electically-charged gas as seen in *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (complete with dinosaurs, giant insects, and other weirdness).

Then I'd use Athasian halflings, hunting amid the giant mushroom jungles..

demiurge1138

11-11-2008 01:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Svirfneblin are interesting, but not the way they're usually played. I'd play them up as being like Norse-myth dwarves-- secretive, live deep underground, access to weird magic and wondrous item-crafting capabilities. OK, so this makes them more like dwarves. But emphasizing their magic might be a good way to further differentiate them.

6inTruder

11-11-2008 05:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9586776)
Urd

*Urds are a bit like the flind to the kobold's gnoll, except with wings. They are a tougher, **more intelligent**, nastier version, who like to drop rocks from above.*

Kobold: Average.
Urd: Low.

see

11-11-2008 09:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I favored the idea of kobold necromancers, instead of generalist mages — if only because that maximized their difference from gnome illusionists — with the same "any two allowed classes, but not three" multiclassing option as gnomes. (And let's nevermind the Complete Book of Humanoids.)

Since the ability requirement for necromancy was Wisdom 16, in practice effectively all kobold necromancers would be multiclassed cleric/necromancers, given how well the powers of evil clerics synergize with necromancy. (Much like the Dex 16 requirement meant gnome illusionists were natural illusionist/thieves, especially with how those two synergized.)

The result was that the leadership of the kobold empire was a theomagocracy of cleric/necromancers . . . wise, intelligent, organized, malevolent, and commanding armies of undead. With the undead serving as cannon fodder, kobolds were reserved for specialist tasks in the army — missileers, artillerymen, giant weasel cavalry. The urds of the

empire were seen by the kobolds as the dumb brute cousins, but served as air support and reconnaissance.

Nobody messed with the Empire of the Kobolds. Fortunately, it was remote from the centers of human civilization.

noisms

11-11-2008 07:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9592829)

Kobold: Average.

Urd: Low.

That's weird, I completely misread that. Okay, tougher, *less intelligent*, nastier version...

noisms

11-11-2008 09:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Kuo-Toa

Well, straight after the Kobold we have another famous 'bad guy' monster, the Kuo-toa. These never featured in many of my games because I was never a big fan of the Forgotten Realms or the Underdark, or indeed long winded underground adventures. But the Kuo-toa are undoubtedly an interesting beastie; I'm a sucker for the idea of lost empires and vestigial remnants of once great civilisations. I love the idea that over the millennia they have "become somewhat unstable, possibly as a result of inbreeding, and insanity is common among the species." Indeed, it's a big mystery to me why the Kuo-toa are so much less popular than the boring old Drow.

They also have a good called Blibdoolpoolp. What's not to love?

Some weird titbits:

- The Kuo-toa religious language is a corruption of 'that used on the Elemental Plane of Water' (whatever that is; Water Common?). This means that if a Kuo-toa priest runs across a water elemental being, there is a 75% chance that it will not be attacked. Now that has to be a rare occurrence in a game.
- Kuo-toa have superglue shields, which grab opponents' weapons 25% of the time - with a Bend Bars roll required to remove it.
- They call their babies 'fingerlings' - lord knows why.
- They light up their caverns with phosphorescent fungi. Not as strange as it may sound - I've actually seen phosphorescent fungi.

sim_james

11-11-2008 10:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Deep Ones! Except under the earth rather than in the harbour...

... and their goddess has better boobies than Mother Hydra.

(Thank goodness for the Egyptian deities section of Deities and Demigods, or far too many younguns might have fixated on the unnatural-headed nude...)

Wakboth

11-11-2008 10:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9596071)

ndeed, it's a big mystery to me why the Kuo-toa are so much less popular than the boring old Drow.

Hot evil lesbian dominatrixes vs. goggle-eyed, pallid insane fish-people. :D

Quote:

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- They light up their caverns with phosphorescent fungi. Not as strange as it may sound - I've actually seen phosphorescent fungi.

"Fingerling" is a real term for young fish, especially trout or salmon.

Kuo-toas are an excellent example of 2e's approach to rules, by the way; they're full of odd little exceptions and mechanics that never ever show up anywhere else, like the superglue shields.

I think kuo-toas suffer in comparison with the other, better known species of evil fish-people, the sahuagin. They're rather removed from the world, to begin with, whereas sahuagin are out there in the coastal waters, doing their "aquatic shark Nazis" thing.

Hmm... kuo-toas as stand-ins for Lovecraft's Deep Ones, maybe?

noisms

11-11-2008 10:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9596153)

Kuo-toas are an excellent example of 2e's approach to rules, by the way; they're full of odd little exceptions and mechanics that never ever show up anywhere else, like the superglue shields.

Yep, the entry is chock full of such things. One of my favourites is that, if more than 20 are encountered, they have a 50% chance of being 1d6 miles from their lair.

Wakshaani

11-11-2008 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Taking back to 1st ed, you also find that Kuo-Toa are one of the Elder Races, with Lizardmen, Aarocka, and Bullywugs, all HUGE races back before Elves and Dwarves, let alone humans, walked the world. This Sleestak-like coolness has never been explored deeply enough, but, you can stick all manner of cavern complexes and underground ruined temples to unknown gods, toss some fishyness on there, and, bang, Kua-Toa backstory for the PCs to discover. Ever woder who made Welm of a certain powerful magic item trilogy? Make it a Kuo-Toa artifact that they search for (Thus the chance of a large group far from home) and boom... hotness.

In a similar style, toss out some magic items that were kitted out for Kuo-Toa and underwaterness, rather than human surface style. Changing something as simple as a an Arrow of Slaying to a Crossbow Bolt of Slaying, or make Bracers of Armor Class into coral, inlaid with pearls, and it's no longer *just* a magic item, but an Old One item.

With their religion, you can tie in coastal cultists, or have a saltwater lake in teh backwoods where a small group of (very!) inbred Kuo-Toa lurk, stealing human women (Or having them sacrificed) to try and freshen up the old genepool. (Ewww) Nobody in town talk to starngers about it, but, the whole place is kind of eerie. And the two poles at the end of the dock are *awfully* tall for mooring posts for rowboats, aren't they? ... Are those *manacles* on them?!

You can also have plot hooks galore using their Ancient Knowledge, by having Drow hunt them down, or have Aquatic ELves send adventurers to go fetch, say, a Kua-Toa priest, to translate the runes on a magical Conch shell.

These guys are *bursting* with plots.

demiurge1138

11-12-2008 12:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9596153)

Kuo-toas are an excellent example of 2e's approach to rules, by the way; they're full of odd little exceptions and mechanics that never ever show up anywhere else, like the superglue shields.

I think kuo-toas suffer in comparision with the other, better known species of evil fish-people, the sahuagin. They're rather removed from the world, to begin with, whereas sahuagin are out there in the coastal waters, doing their "aquatic shark Nazis" thing.

Hmm... kuo-toas as stand-ins for Lovecraft's Deep Ones, maybe?

I'm surprised nobody picked up on the pincer staff mechanic, which I noticed while reading the kuo-toa entry is a weird one. It can grip anything in girth between an elf and a gnoll? Where exactly is the "humanoids by girth" table?

And kuo-toa as deep ones has definitely been done, mostly in Paizo's Lovecraft-happy years running Dungeon and Dragon. The deep-water kuo-toa are still out there in the very far reaches, worshiping Dagon, and one of the last 3.5 modules released by Dungeon (online) was "Last Breaths of Ashenport", involving a Dagon cult in a sleepy little coastal town using kuo-toa that used to be people as muscle.

If it makes you feel any better, noisms, I've used kuo-toa a lot more than I ever used drow. In one campaign I ran, the kuo-toa were the only of the sleeping races that could not dream--whether this was some quirk in their psychology or a divine curse was never really answered. The kuo-toa's solution? *Pull the Dreamlands physically into the Prime Material Plane*, which required dozens of kuo-toa sects around the world working in relative unison on various eldritch rituals. The PCs were called on to stop the local ritual--they succeeded, but not all the other teams around the world did. Which is why the moon is a huge skull, and new races of strange creatures began appearing in the world and nobody really noticed...

And Blibdoolpoolp is a running gag in my apartment. As my roommate said, "it makes sense that the name of their god can be said when completely underwater."

YojimboC

11-12-2008 02:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The two page write-up for the Kuo-Toa in the original Fiend Folio was too intimidating for me as a young DM, so I never really used them. Their Monstrous Compendium picture was so lame, on the other hand, that I was never inspired to make use of them even when I was a little more accomplished at gaming.

But now... the idea of degenerate, underground fish-people sounds really cool.

kelvingreen

11-12-2008 04:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, to me, the whole Kuo Toa canon write up gets chucked out the window, and instead they're fantasy Deep Ones. Works for me. One of the better *Neverwinter Nights* campaigns features an episode complete with Deep Kuo Toa, and the powerful, but trapped, Illithid they worship.

JRM

11-12-2008 06:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9596071)

Kuo-Toa

Weren't Kuo-Toan's Chaotic Neutral with evil tendencies back in first edition? I like that idea better than just making them yet another Evil with a big E race, having Kuo-Toa psychology mirror the apparently crazy randomness of wild oceans and bottomless darkness.

They were also quite approachable in their inaugural module, *D2 Shrine of the Kuo-Toa*. They were quite happy

for adventurers to come in and make offering to the Sea Mother, if they behaved themselves.

The "One of the Elder Races" bit is something that has to be developed further. It's just begging for a Prehistoric Empires campaign, where savage tribes of humans and elves roam the wilderness fighting dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts, and reptilian civilizations rule the world.

I don't much care for the Kuo Toans equal Deep Ones bit. It's been done, and sahuagin arguably fill that role better. They're already in the sea, and the existence of malenti hints at the possibility of horrible cross-breeding experiments.

see

11-13-2008 08:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9600138)
Weren't Kuo-Toan's Chaotic Neutral with evil tendencies back in first edition?

No, other way around -- NE with chaotic tendencies.

6inTruder

11-13-2008 08:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Did anyone comment on the strangely familiar picture for the Kobold? Just curious.

As for Kuo-toa, I always felt like they needed to get out of the underdark more. At least on the watery side. But underwater adventures always seemed a little... hard to sell?

JRM

11-13-2008 03:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9602803)
Did anyone comment on the strangely familiar picture for the Kobold? Just curious.

As for Kuo-toa, I always felt like they needed to get out of the underdark more. At least on the watery side. But underwater adventures always seemed a little... hard to sell?

Yes, they were a bit of a damp squib as far as most players' enthusiasm goes, at least in my experience. Maybe they don't like the additional restrictions of adventuring underwater? Plus there's the chance of any support ship they brought along sinking, which is a common complaint about nautical adventures.

Aerial adventures seem to be an easier sell, but I don't think they're as common as underwater ones, for some

reason. Which is a bit odd, if you think about it.

noisms

11-13-2008 07:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9602803)

Did anyone comment on the strangely familiar picture for the Kobold? Just curious.

I think it was commented on when the Goblin entry came up.

Wakshaani

11-13-2008 09:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9604009)

Yes, they were a bit of a damp squib as far as most players' enthusiasm goes, at least in my experience. Maybe they don't like the additional restrictions of adventuring underwater? Plus there's the chance of any support ship they brought along sinking, which is a common complaint about nautical adventures.

Aerial adventures seem to be an easier sell, but I don't think they're as common as underwater ones, for some reason. Which is a bit odd, if you think about it.

Yeah, but all you have to do is *imply* airships and many a geek goes "Oooo" and starts looking for boarding pass.

YojimboC

11-14-2008 01:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9602803)

But underwater adventures always seemed a little... hard to sell?

Which is a shame, given the massive amount of watery adversaries that every edition of D&D offers. I once played with a guy who would have a fit whenever the possibility of an underwater adventure presented itself. "And give the DM a chance to use all those aquatic monsters in the Monster Manual? No way."

Malignant Marionette

11-14-2008 05:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well, if it's in a longer campaign instead of a one-off adventure, who says you have to sell it to the players? Sink their ship, not the support one. Or have the important item they need be on a ship that sank decades ago, or a plant growing in the deep ocean. Or maybe the latest dastardly villain is an aquatic creature.

Pete Whalley

11-14-2008 07:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The timing on this thread is perfect.

I've been pondering what to do when my party reach Port Blacksand for a while now...and Kuo Toa plots to drag the city down under the waves is a great one.

I'm thinking subterranean temples below the sewer system, boogly eyed cultist-minions roaming the city...Innsmouth meets Humanoids from the Deep. :D

kelvingreen

11-14-2008 07:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pete Whalley (Post 9606669)

I've been pondering what to do when my party reach Port Blacksand for a while now...

Ooh, what system are you using? I'm always interested to see bits and pieces of *Fighting Fantasy* popping up in other games.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pete Whalley (Post 9606669)

I'm thinking subterranean temples below the sewer system, boogly eyed cultist-minions roaming the city...Innsmouth meets Humanoids from the Deep. :D

There's a precedent for it, as there was a Fishman shrine (and cult) underneath Blacksand in *Dungeons*.

Pete Whalley

11-14-2008 08:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9606782)

Ooh, what system are you using? I'm always interested to see bits and pieces of Fighting Fantasy popping up in other games.

D&D 4e. I've taken the sort of, slightly default setting of the core books and fleshed it out with bits and bats of FF.

Quote:

There's a precedent for it, as there was a Fishman shrine (and cult) underneath Blacksand in *Dungeoneer*.

Aye. That's where I got the idea- along with having Xortan Throg as a semi-Big Bad for the early arc of the campaign.

I'm also working up a Deathtrap Dungeon based adventure for later on.

noisms

11-14-2008 09:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pete Whalley (Post 9607029)

D&D 4e. I've taken the sort of, slightly default setting of the core books and fleshed it out with bits and bats of FF.

Aye. That's where I got the idea- along with having Xortan Throg as a semi-Big Bad for the early arc of the campaign.

I'm also working up a Deathtrap Dungeon based adventure for later on.

Do you have the Advanced Fighting Fantasy supplement *Blacksand*? It's pretty good, and I think I still have it somewhere.

Inyssius

11-15-2008 09:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oddly, the Kuo-Toa actually have those superglue shields in 4th Edition:

Sticky Shield (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will)

The kuo-toa [---] makes an attack against the attacker: +18 vs. Reflex; a weapon wielded by the target drops in the target's space.

This is made rather remarkable by the fact that, as far as I know, they are the *only monsters in all of 4E* that have any

ability related to sundering or disarming weapons. Why this entire class of ability would deserve to be reserved solely for the *kuo-toa* of all creatures, I have no idea.

'S pretty damn cool, though. Nice bit of legacy there.

6inTruder

11-16-2008 02:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9596071)

Kuo-Toa

But no mention of "sages" thinking the Kuo-toa are third part in the three way stabalizing war between the Drow, Illithids and Kuo-toa?!?!?! Not that I can really figure on the Kuo-toa's beef with the Illithids mind...

Wakshaani

11-16-2008 12:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9613332)

But no mention of "sages" thinking the Kuo-toa are third part in the three way stabalizing war between the Drow, Illithids and Kuo-toa?!?!?! Not that I can really figure on the Kuo-toa's beef with the Illithids mind...

Got this one!

Kuo-Toa are on of teh Elder Races, along with Lizardfolk, Aarokka, and Bullywugs. There was a race before THEM, however, the Eldest Race ... Illithids. Translated properly, Illithid can mean "Eldest Ones" or "Spineless Ones" and, originally, were little more than parasitic slugs who got a break when creatures went bipedal and hitched along for teh ride. Kuo-Toa are the oldest of teh Elder Races, thus were likely the first hosts for the Flayers, which explains the mutal aquatic nature of their kids and vaguely similar lifestyle in the days of yore.

They rebelled against poppa, taking the Eldest out and locking away their Chtonic gods, then got themselves bombed back into teh stone age by teh same magics that shattered teh Bullywugs and Lizardmen ... some great war befell them after they locked "Dad" away, as each tried to claim the leadership post for their own kind. In time, they were all but wiped out, regressed to primitive levels, and younger races (Elves and Dwarves) came in and took over... there was such a huge time gap between them, mind, that Elves and Dwarve shad no *clue* that these cave-slurping fishmen could have ever been anything close to Dwarvenkind, let alone the predominant species in the entire world.

Teh Mind Flayers need the Kuo-Toa as host bodies even to this day, and have some parental pressure ability to lean on them somewhat, but, neither side trusts one another (After all, teh Kuo-Toa betrayed them ... some day that bill'll come due!) but, for now, it's an arms-length truce. Teh Drow, of course, are investigating all of teh Illithiad's lost cities, culling biotechnology and looking into the Eldest Gods, which the Kuo-Toa Do Not Want. So, they're left trying to play the two sides off against one another, with teh MAIN goal of keeping all the Eldest

Gods safely locked away.

Bonus points for using teh Curellean Sign or tying Lloth's origin to being an escaped Eldest.

noisms

11-17-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lamia

Coming relatively hot on the heels of the Jackalwere is another shape-changing "damsel in distress" style creature, the Lamia - although these creatures have the more interesting and useful tactic of "casting an illusion of a lost child in distress or a group of peasants being attacked by a large beast, while hiding itself, awaiting the right moment to attack from the rear."

Lamias are basically centaurs, but with a woman and lion rather than a man/horse. That makes them rather like an old race from the Fighting Fantasy books called the felinaur, which I always liked. (Better than the boring old Wemics.) It also puts them into that rather odd legendary creature category of Female Creatures Which Are Really Horrible And Mean. I quite like that category, because based on long life experience and a few years of marriage I am well aware (like most men) that females definitely are horrible and mean... But it does make you wonder about The Ancients and their ideas. There aren't a heck of a lot of Male monsters which eat people - unless you count things like Hydrae and what have you, who aren't really 'male' in the same sense that Lamias or Medusae are female.

Anyway, Lamias' main modus operandi is illusionary magic, but they can also drain Wisdom from their victims and thereby force them into servitude (if WIS falls below 3). There is also a tougher variant called the *Lamia Noble*, which is made up of a person (male or female) with a serpent's body rather than a lion's. The nobles seem to prefer to wreak evil, spread chaos, etc., in human society, rather than just eat people. One feels that Lamia would be more interesting if they were based on the actual mythical Lamia, a beautiful queen who ate children, but I suppose they make for a decent mid-level challenge all the same.

demiurge1138

11-18-2008 12:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Manticores are male. Centaurs and satyrs are male, too--centaurs will murder you and rape your women, but satyrs are generally more comical than threatening. Generally.

I like lamiae--the automatic Wisdom drain is nasty, and synergistic with their charms and illusions--and managed to get a lot of use out of them recently. I ran "Rise of the Runelords", Paizo's first Pathfinder series, and it's got lamiae aplenty as mid-level masterminds. It's also got a few new species, like the kuchrima (a disgusting vulture-thing suspected of being the missing link between lamiae and harpies) and the lamia harridan, a Huge lamia that treats giants the same way normal lamiae treat humans. These last ones I tweaked with feats to give them lots of attacks of opportunity. Wisdom-draining attacks of opportunity. The fighters in the party didn't like that one bit.

Hellzon

11-18-2008 02:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Obligatory mention of 4E lamia - they're a swarm of scarabs masquerading as a hot elf chick. What were they like in 3.X?

And since demiurge1138 mentioned satyrs - they're mean in 4E. I've been looking forward to the Satyr entry for a long while now.

Malignant Marionette

11-18-2008 05:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 9619569)

Obligatory mention of 4E lamia - they're a swarm of scarabs masquerading as a hot elf chick. What were they like in 3.X?

In 3,5 they're the same as in 2e, but aren't described as female and have all of six lines of description, including their appearance. Plus of course a lot more (in comparison, at least) on how they fight.

demiurge1138

11-18-2008 07:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 9619569)

Obligatory mention of 4E lamia - they're a swarm of scarabs masquerading as a hot elf chick. What were they like in 3.X?

I really don't get the 4e lamia. I like the concept - hot chick turns out to be made of beetles! - but it's not a lamia. Lamiae have always been human from the waist up, animal from the waist down. Well, by "always" I mean "always in D&D, and since the Renaissance or so in the real world"

randomgamer8466

11-18-2008 09:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I am a Satyr enthusiast, too. I am outraged that 4e didn't stat Satyr as a playable race in the back of the MM; instead they gave us Shadar-kai and Warforged. WAAARRRRRRRRRFOOOOOOOOOOORGEEEEEEEEDDDDD how I loathe thee. I'll take my D&D robot-free. I'm glad we won't be discussing them in this thread for 2e.

noisms

11-18-2008 09:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9620879)

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thee. I'll take my D&D robot-free. I'm glad we won't be discussing them in this thread for 2e.

Should I be embarrassed or proud that I don't really know what Shadar-kai or Warforged are? I saw a picture of Shadar-kai once and thought they looked a bit like a gang of teenage goths, but I have no idea about worforged beyond "they're like robots for D&D".

kelvingreen

11-18-2008 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9622573)

I saw a picture of Shadar-kai once and thought they looked a bit like a gang of teenage goths

Shadar-kai exist because apparently Drow aren't emo enough any more. ;)

JRM

11-18-2008 11:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9619106)

Manticores are male. Centaurs and satyrs are male, too--centaurs will murder you and rape your women, but satyrs are generally more comical than threatening. Generally.

There are a few things worth disagreeing with here.

Centaurs are both male and female , and I'm not just talking about **Disney's Fantasia**, there have been female centaurs or **Kentaurides** since classical Greco-Roman times.

As for Manticores, they may have been described as having the faces of men, but (1) I've read that there are a few heraldic depictions of manticores with female faces - although, alas, I haven't been able to see one, and (2) just because it *looks* like a male human's face doesn't mean the animal it's attached to is male, both sexes could look the same.

Besides which, surely manticores, centaurs and similar hybrids don't use their humanoid front-ends for reproduction. Centaurs and lamias are not usually portrayed with procreative plumbing below their humanoid waists, despite rarely wearing clothes to cover that area. Contrariwise, I've seen a number of images of male centaurs whose equine hindquarters prove without a doubt that they're stallions. (E.g. the Parthenon frieze of Herakles fighting the Centaurs).

Aren't there legends that lamia would conceal their lower bodies in bushes and tempt men towards them by flashing the alluring charms of their female upper bodies. So, maybe lamias have fore-bodies that always look like beautiful female females regardless of their actual gender, but those titties are just for show, their bestial hindquarters are male or female according to their actual gender and do all the real work of procreation and

nursing their young.

Now I'm thinking of an AD&D scenario with a male character who develops a depraved obsession about lamias and forced one to drink a *philter of love*, only to discover the hard way that his victim is the same sex as he is.:eek:

...and hilarity ensues....:p

Oh, and as for Satyrs, at least they were always male in the traditional tales (as far as I know). But then, a satyr is as much nature-spirit as a chimeric monster so presumably isn't quite as restrained by natural biology. Also, Satyrs may be comical in some of their modern manifestations, but classically they were often violent lechers as bad as, if not worse, than Centaurs.

demiurge1138

11-19-2008 12:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9622573)

Should I be embarrassed or proud that I don't really know what Shadar-kai or Warforged are? I saw a picture of Shadar-kai once and thought they looked a bit like a gang of teenage goths, but I have no idea about warforged beyond "they're like robots for D&D".

Shadar-kai - fey spirits trapped in the Plane of Shadow, doomed by a curse to lose their souls if they die (or even go unconscious!). So they nail them in with cold iron spikes. In 3e, anyway. 4e dropped the cursed by fate angle, making them emo without a cause, as it were.

Warforged - D&D robots is where everybody starts, but the Tin Man or sentient golem is probably more accurate. In Eberron (where they belong...), warforged were built during the Last War so that there would be a ready source of well-trained, disposable soldiers that didn't have to eat or sleep. Once the War was over, however, they became a people without a home or purpose, trying to carve out a niche for themselves in a world that no longer really needs them.

Wakboth

11-19-2008 03:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9623271)

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As I recall it, shadar-kai are not "emo without a cause" (and could people please stop using "emo" as the general term for "the kids these day are so whiny"?). They're the descendants of people who made a deal with Raven Queen, the goddess of death, for immortality. And they got it... only to realize it's not as good as they'd thought, because it involves living in the Shadowfell and developing terminal ennui. So they tattoo, scar, brand

and pierce themselves to feel things, so their personalities don't just fade away into the gray.

Quote:

Warforged - D&D robots is where everybody starts, but the Tin Man or sentient golem is probably more accurate. In Eberron (where they belong...), warforged were built during the Last War so that there would be a ready source of well-trained, disposable soldiers that didn't have to eat or sleep. Once the War was over, however, they became a people without a home or purpose, trying to carve out a niche for themselves in a world that no longer really needs them.

Eberron's the home setting of Warforged, but I can see them fitting really nicely into *Spelljammer* and *Planescape*, or settings similar to those.

demiurge1138

11-19-2008 09:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9623962)

Eberron's the home setting of Warforged, but I can see them fitting really nicely into Spelljammer and Planescape, or settings similar to those.

Oh, I agree. But I don't think that all Generic Fantasy World Xs need warforged in them. Unless, say, they're made out of ceramic and were built by the ancient Wind Dukes. Or a spaceship crashes...

WalcottTwins

11-20-2008 02:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I like warforged, but I always try to save them for settings where they make sense. Mostly just 'cause playing as a construct is cool, and they're good for navel-gazing.

(Also, heya noisms. This is Rach's Reflections, if you couldn't tell)

YojimboC

11-21-2008 01:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9622573)

Should I be embarrassed or proud that I don't really know what Shadar-kai or Warforged are? I saw a picture of Shadar-kai once and thought they looked a bit like a gang of teenage goths, but I have no idea about worforged

beyond "they're like robots for D&D".

You certainly shouldn't be embarrassed, but proud is probably a little strong.

noisms

11-21-2008 09:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lammasu

I've never been able to tolerate this creature in its D&D incarnation, mainly because I first got properly acquainted with Lammasu through the Warhammer Chaos Dwarfs, who use these creatures as mounts for their sorcerers. I also would have preferred pairing the Lammasu and Shedu (who are practically the same thing anyway in AD&D) as the female and male versions of the same creature, which is after all how the Assyrians appeared to see them. That said, I love ancient mesopotamian mythology, indeed its probably my favourite, so Lammasu have to get a grudging thumbs-up.

They do however suffer from that problem which all powerful lawful good creatures do: such beings have to exist as a balance for all the powerful chaotic evil monsters, but they're difficult to include in a game as anything other than a) a stick with which the DM can beat naughty players, b) a walking talking quest dispenser, or c) a handy bodyguard to protect a party which has bitten off more than it can chew. This very problem was discussed in the Kirin entry, and it also applies to creatures like the Shedu, Sphinx and Couatl. What do you use these creatures *for*?

There are a couple of useful plot point titbits scattered through the entry, though. For one thing, all Lammasu inhabit "old abandoned temples...[which] have not lost their consecration"; you immediately have to imagine ancient pyramids and monuments hidden deep in forests or mountain ranges, full of hidden treasures - a typical trope, but turned on its head because the guardians are *good*. How would a good party get its hands on the loot?

Another: every month all the Lammasu in a given area get together for a conflag on "the war against ~~terror~~ evil" called a Whitemoon, which causes the entire temple to glow like a beacon. Adventure idea: for years and years people have noticed a strange light glowing deep in the mountains once a month. Now a rich merchant is offering a reward for whoever can find the source...

kelvingreen

11-21-2008 09:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've always preferred the *Warhammer* Lammasu to the *D&D* ones. That whole Chaos Dwarf army list was great, one of the best they've produced for the game.

The only way I can think of to make use of these enlightened and powerful LG creatures is to play them as so detached and distant from earthly concerns that, while to their far-reaching cosmic awareness they are acting towards the same goal as the heroes, they may appear unhelpful or even hostile to those they're helping.

DMH

11-21-2008 11:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9634946)
What do you use these creatures for?

That depends on how the setting is constructed. If the PCs are the end all and be all, then there isn't much place for good critters. If the setting is one where there is actions outside those of the PCs and the forces of good and evil are at war, then there are plenty of opportunities for such beings.

The PCs can't be everywhere and can't do everything unless the setting is meant specifically to do that.

demiurge1138

11-22-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The only time I've ever used lammasu is in quoting the 3e example of an "unbelievable Bluff": "No, see, I'm actually a lammasu that was polymorphed into a halfling by an evil sorcerer. You know we lammasu are trustworthy, so you can believe everything I say."

No, wait, I take that back. I ran a one-shot in which somebody played a healer (not a cleric, but the dumb class from Miniatures Handbook) who was high enough level to have a lammasu cohort rather than a unicorn (sigh). The lammasu was much better at healing than his supposed master was.

JRM

11-22-2008 04:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9635803)

The only time I've ever used lammasu is in quoting the 3e example of an "unbelievable Bluff": "No, see, I'm actually a lammasu that was polymorphed into a halfling by an evil sorcerer. You know we lammasu are trustworthy, so you can believe everything I say."

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Watch out with that 3rd edition talk, don't you want to maintain the noble mien of a Grogard? Why that's only the next-to-latest-and-a-half edition, it's not even out of the shops yet!:)

As for Lammasu, I only remember once using one in a campaign (or was it a Shedu?) - as a random encounter! It was in my very early days as a DM, and I rolled on on the wilderness encounters table and that's what came up. Unfortunately for the PCs, they were mostly Chaotic Evil in alignment, so it quickly turned to blows and the lammasu nearly wiped them out.

Sleeper

11-22-2008 05:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9634946)

They do however suffer from that problem which all powerful lawful good creatures do: such beings have to exist as a balance for all the powerful chaotic evil monsters, but they're difficult to include in a game as anything other than a) a stick with which the DM can beat naughty players, b) a walking talking quest dispenser, or c) a handy bodyguard to protect a party which has bitten off more than it can chew. This very problem was discussed in the Kirin entry, and it also applies to creatures like the Shedu, Sphinx and Couatl. What do you use these creatures for?

Pets, mounts, allies. The source of rumors, figures in historical events. Strangely inhuman personalities, with similar but not quite the same goals. A world with only monsters for PCs to fight is one-dimensional and shatters my suspension of disbelief. They don't have to play a huge role (and they're definitely underused), but monsters that aren't just growling or sneering things to slaughter is a good thing. They add depth to the world, and are opportunities for conflicts and roleplaying that don't end with one side or the other spitted on a sword.

Plus, despite simplistic interpretations of the alignment system, good can oppose good. Perhaps borrow from the root word of lammasu, "lama". Lammasu are the aescetics who achieved Nirvana, but chose to retain an earthly form. However, in the church proper, this is now considered heresy. There have been no new lammasu in hundreds of years, because to forsake the opportunity to become one with the universe and take on a physical albeit immortal form, is considered... obscene. They could be hunted and slain by the more pragmatic (e.g. LN) members of the faith. They could be persecuted, oppressed. After all, they're a corruption of what should be right and pure, and a distortion of what's familiar is often scarier than something totally different. Or they might be from a foreign, alien religion. The last relics of a lost and forgotten faith. Considered monsters, but largely beneficent. Though occasionally intolerant and judgmental, and even violent. Or just struggling with misunderstanding. Focus on moral dilemmas than combat.

Not that I ever used a lammasu. But the potential is there.

Kakita Kojiro

11-22-2008 11:39 AM

my fun monster-ending-in-u story

Way back when I was in high school (looong time ago, kiddies), I actually *played* a lammasu character. Or a shedu. We could never quite figure out which.

It was in a 3rd party adventure about Fez, the wizard of clocks, or somesuch. The idea was you traipse around a clock-shaped land, then finally go to the center and confront the dragon whose head may have been stuck in a jewel, or maybe we were supposed to *stick* its head in a jewel. Hey, it was years ago!

Anyway, there were pregen characters, and you all had amnesia, so you kind of had to figure out what your character could do. The guest-DM asked which of us were great roleplayers, and my perfidious friends sold me out, so I got stuck with... the lammasuish sheduish thingummy. Spent the entire adventure wracking my brains for what, exactly, either of the damn things *did*. I mean, seriously, without opening a book, can you tell me what powers a lammasu has? (no fair, **noisms**; you just read the thing). Or how to differentiate between a shedu and lammasu, assuming you don't know what powers are available?

So I had to settle for whacky hijinks, since I wasn't contributing even as much as knows-how-to-fix-a-cuckoo-clock guy. And *that* poor schmuck was useless in all but one of the places we visited. And in that place? he pushed a button. Whee!

I should say that the guest-DM was awesome awesomeness... he had *props* for everything we found, including runic writing on several items which we had to decode. (the other group who played through the same adventure never figured out the ring said "Wear me and die", for example. *their* fixing-clocks guy never even got the chance to push that fateful button.) Also fun stuff such as a bag whose tie was sealed in wax -- and the wax had an *explosive rune* on it... when anyone but the can't-remember-he's-a-thief tried to get into the bag, guest-DM put mittens on 'em.

I, of course, had hooves or paws or some crazyness, and was told I'd need to use my feet. Because, you know. Lammasu... or Shedu. Oy.

DMH

11-23-2008 07:20 PM

Re: my fun monster-ending-in-u story

By coincidence I watched The Golden Voyage of Sinbad last night. As well as being the source for the homunculus, it might be the source that EGG used for the lammasu. The one that appeared in the film was the good monster (the evil was a one eyed centaur). Too bad the characters were stupid and let the lammasu die for no good reason. But then, there were several stupid decisions made in that movie.

JRM

11-23-2008 08:38 PM

Re: my fun monster-ending-in-u story

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9642243)

By coincidence I watched The Golden Voyage of Sinbad last night. As well as being the source for the homunculus, it might be the source that EGG used for the lammasu. The one that appeared in the film was the good monster (the evil was a one eyed centaur). Too bad the characters were stupid and let the lammasu die for no good reason. But then, there were several stupid decisions made in that movie.

Eh? It was a Gryphon in the Golden Voyage of Sinbad, not a Lamassu. Didn't you notice the eagle's head?

DMH

11-24-2008 03:30 AM

Re: my fun monster-ending-in-u story

Yeah, I was wrong. I was so annoyed at the characters at that point, I was barely paying attention to it.

YojimboC

11-24-2008 04:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

If lammasu dwell in abandoned temples and help keep frontiers free of danger...

... how about a contingent sent by the local church to reclaim a fallen temple in the wilderness, only to find a pride of

lammasu operating out of the place. Naturally, there's more negotiation and role-playing than combat in that scenario, as the church representatives discuss reclaiming the temple and the lammasu may or may not cooperate fully...

... but maybe the PCs have the help the lammasu fight off some evil monsters in the area or clear out levels of the dungeon the lammasu can't reach because they're lions with wings and just don't fit in those spaces.

noisms

11-24-2008 08:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Leech

Not much to say about this entry, which I have to confess I had forgotten existed. Three varieties of bloodsucker are described.

Giant Leech - These are 2 - 5 feet in length (!) and require a successful attack to attach themselves to their target, whereupon they begin to suck blood at 1hp damage per HD per round. Amazingly, there is only a 1% chance of this being noticed if the attack occurs in water; I'm sorry, but the idea that somebody wouldn't notice a **five foot long leech** attaching itself to their leg/back/arm while in water is utterly ludicrous and one of the most absurd things I've read in the MM. I don't care if the creature has "anesthetizing saliva" - I'm going to notice a black slithery five foot long invertebrate attaching itself to my body whether I can feel it bite or not. Imagine if the victim was a halfling; are you trying to tell me he wouldn't notice even though said leech would be *considerably bigger than him*!? Anyway, giant leeches can pass on deadly diseases (50%), so they aren't to be sniffed at.

Throat Leech - This is a tiny bugger that exists in freshwater bodies, waiting to be swallowed in drinking water (10% chance). It then sticks itself in the throat and sucks d3 hit points of blood for ten rounds before dropping off. There is also a 50% chance of choking each round, which will kill the victim if it continues for three consecutive rounds. The rate at which the Throat Leech sucks blood indicates an appetite well above 10 times as strong as the Giant Leech; it is 1" long and can drain 1-3 points, whereas a 2' long individual of the Giant variety can only manage a paltry 1.

Leech Swarm - This is basically a 10' swarm of small leeches who suck blood for 1d10 damage per turn; they can only be dispersed through recourse to an area effect spell. Nasty.

Interesting that the Leech entry necessitates not one, nor two, but FOUR egregious instances of the 2e style exception-based-design we love so much. Must be some kind of record for a one-pager.

DMH

11-24-2008 09:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There is an ecology of the giant leech in Dragon 123 that is actually quite good. The Y shaped bite marks they inflict could be used on other monsters in the swamp and give the PCs a sign of things to come.

demiurge1138

11-25-2008 12:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My roommate Casey is obsessed with the idea of playing a halfling wereleech ninja. He would attach to people and they'd have no idea that they just took massive amounts of sneak attack, because of the anesthetizing saliva, then drain all of their blood. As Casey's said, "unlike the ordinary ninja, where the rest of the PCs don't know you're there, the enemies wouldn't know I'm there either! It would be more like playing a complicated area of effect spell."

For obvious reasons, I have denied Casey this satisfaction.

Wakboth

11-25-2008 02:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Throat leech is one of those lovely little creepy-crawly "gotcha!" monsters that literally infest 1e and 2e, along with rot grubs and those ear-burrowing critters that lurked in dungeon doors just waiting for a rogue to come and try to listen what's going on on the other side. :D

6inTruder

11-25-2008 03:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9646775)

*My roommate Casey is obsessed with the idea of playing a halfling wereleech ninja. He would attach to people and they'd have no idea that they just took massive amounts of sneak attack, because of the anesthetizing saliva, then drain all of their blood. As Casey's said, "unlike the ordinary ninja, where the rest of the PCs don't know you're there, the enemies wouldn't know I'm there either! It would be more like **playing a complicated area of effect spell.**"*

For obvious reasons, I have denied Casey this satisfaction.

I know what the next character I try and play'll be!

sim_james

11-25-2008 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Halfling wereleech ninjas do sound kinda cool...

JRM

11-25-2008 09:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9649825)

Halfling wereleech ninjas do sound kinda cool...

Are you sure? I heard they suck...:D

Flees the scene, cackling evilly

I think we all knew someone wouldn't be able to resist that pun.

JRM

11-25-2008 09:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9645827)

Leech

Not much to say about this entry, which I have to confess I had forgotten existed. Three varieties of bloodsucker are described.

*Giant Leech - These are 2 - 5 feet in length (!) and require a successful attack to attach themselves to their target, whereupon they begin to suck blood at 1hp damage per HD per round. Amazingly, there is only a 1% chance of this being noticed if the attack occurs in water; I'm sorry, but the idea that somebody wouldn't notice a **five foot long leech** attaching itself to their leg/back/arm while in water is utterly ludicrous and one of the most absurd things I've read in the MM. I don't care if the creature has "anesthetizing saliva" - I'm going to notice a black slithery five foot long invertebrate attaching itself to my body whether I can feel it bite or not. Imagine if the victim was a halfling; are you trying to tell me he wouldn't notice even though said leech would be considerably bigger than him!? Anyway, giant leeches can pass on deadly diseases (50%), so they aren't to be sniffed at.*

Hmm, at first sight I can see two possibilities:

1: Giant Leeches are lightweights for their size, resembling skinny 2-5' long worms. That doesn't match **any** of their AD&D illustrations though.

2: That anesthetizing saliva is damn good stuff. AD&D characters who get bit by giant leeches are so stoned that they barely notice anything. As a result, 'leech parlours' have become popular vice-dens in which the poor can anesthetize their woes away - it's cheaper than gin and doesn't ruin your liver. Indeed, there may be no harmful side-effects unless the "leech-junkie" is a hemophiliac or the like.

Kapten

11-25-2008 09:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9650521)

Hmm, at first sight I can see two possibilities:

2: That anesthetizing saliva is damn good stuff. AD&D characters who get bit by giant leeches are so stoned that they barely notice anything. As a result, 'leech parlours' have become popular vice-dens in which the poor can anesthetize their woes away - it's cheaper than gin and doesn't ruin your liver. Indeed, there may be no harmful side-effects unless the "leech-junkie" is a hemophiliac or the like.

But then they would notice *something*, or the poison would be technically a paralyzing poison if the person would be totally stoned. I think that a leech could suck blood undetected as long as the leech and the victim aren't moving, otherwise it would be entirely impossible. Either the weight of the leech or the fact that you would be stumbling about with an anestesezied body part would tip you off that something is wrong.

Wakshaani

11-25-2008 09:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

On the one hand, not many plots drop down from simple leechery, save "Village Wisewoman wants the party to go collect her a few leeches, for proper medical bleeding, and awards a bonus for a Giant Leech ... it's said that, despite them being five feet long, they anesthesia saliva is *so* strong that you don't feel a thing!"

BUT!

For random dungeon encounters, how can you go wrong with either A) giant leeches or B) a SWARM of leeches, for belly-churning flipflops? A simple 10' trap door-covered pit? Fill it with a Leech Swarm! Carion Crawler needs a buddy? Giant leech! Crawler paralyzes, Leech drinks, Crawler eats teh dead ... it's the Sea Anemone/Clown Fish of the dungeon set! Any, of course, any sort of "Elder Wyrn" worshipping cult has *got* to have leeches on hand. Makes for a great human sacrifice, where the princess is strapped to a rock and leeches dumped on her for a slow, delrium-producing death that gives teh group time to get in there and recue her, but is slow-motion lethal if they don't. Heroism!

Sleeper

11-25-2008 10:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Now I'm imagining a halfling in a slate gray trenchcoat dual-wielding a pair of slick black leeches that are each twice his size. He strides up, cocks his arms back, and strikes out with his horribly unbalanced bloodsucking organic whips... and nobody notices. Sure it's hard for an orc to carry on a causal conversation about gardening gnomes with a giant 40 lb leech plastered over its shoulder. But, somehow, it manages.

JRM

11-25-2008 10:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9650572)

But then they would notice something, or the poison would be technically a paralyzing poison if the person would be totally stoned. I think that a leech could suck blood undetected as long as the leech and the victim aren't moving, otherwise it would be entirely impossible. Either the weight of the leech or the fact that you would be stumbling about with an anestesezied body part would tip you off that something is wrong.

Don't think so, a strong anesthetic can render someone completely insensitive or unaware. A paralysed person is incapable of moving their muscles, they may still be able to feel in their motionless limbs.

noisms

11-25-2008 11:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9650617)

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Answer: You can't go wrong with any of those things! ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9650788)

Don't think so, a strong anesthetic can render someone completely insensitive or unaware. A paralysed person is incapable of moving their muscles, they may still be able to feel in their motionless limbs.

But surely if you were in the water you'd be able to feel, hang on, why is it that I can't feel the water temperature just on my left leg? And come to think of it, why is it that I have to practically drag that limb through the water, as if it's three times as heavy as it should be? Oh right, it's because **there's a fucking five foot long bloody leech** attached to it! ;)

6inTruder

11-26-2008 04:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9649825)

Halfling wereleech ninjas do sound kinda cool...

Screw that, I want to play the Complicated Area Of Effect Spell!

But really, what we're all waiting for (aside from a why there's fucking BBQ smell at the damn library?!?!?) is Leprechauns!

Kapten

11-26-2008 06:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9650788)

Don't think so, a strong anesthetic can render someone completely insensitive or unaware. A paralysed person is incapable of moving their muscles, they may still be able to feel in their motionless limbs.

My experiences with local anesthetics are limited to xylocain, which is the one used in my profession (well, xylocain with or without adrenalin, carbocain, etc etc but they are all variations of the same theme). They make you entirely insensitive to pain if applied right and in small enough incisions (for example, they wouldn't work for gastric surgery). You do feel movement and pressure when anesthetized. They paralyze muscles (they block sodium-transporters on the nerve cells, hence the nerve cells can't transmit impulses --> the nerve cells don't work). So even if you wouldn't feel the leech slicing your leg open, you would feel the fall to the ground that a paralyzed leg brings.

With a stretch of imagination, I can accept that someone lying on the ground wouldn't notice a leech of that size sucking blood from him, even if it's unlikely. An overdose of xylocain is dangerous since it brings the risk of a severe drop in blood pressure. Then, of course, I don't think the giant leech uses xylocain ;).

Tangent: Certain paralyzed people can feel in limbs that they can't move. This is often due to spinal cord injuries. The sensoric impulses take other paths in the spinal cord than the motoric, which means that you can have damaged motoric pathways while the sensoric ones are unhurt. This won't happen with a local anesthetic, though, since it puts all nerves in the area out of function.

JRM

11-26-2008 06:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9650992)

*But surely if you were in the water you'd be able to feel, hang on, why is it that I can't feel the water temperature just on my left leg? And come to think of it, why is it that I have to practically drag that limb through the water, as if it's three times as heavy as it should be? Oh right, it's because **there's a fucking five foot long bloody leech attached to it!** ;)*

The point is that the anesthetized character may not be able to wonder about things, since some forms of anesthesia can render the subject incapable of conscious thought. So, a giant leech bit character may be standing in the water with a vacant look on their face, rather than carrying on adventuring as if nothing happened while wondering why one leg is suddenly a hundred pounds heavier than the other.

Or, we could just make giant leeches smaller - a foot-long leech could easily hold a couple of pints of blood, enough to kill if drained from a human-sized victim, and would only weigh a few pounds.

JRM

11-26-2008 06:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9654641)

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Perfectly true. My thinking is that a giant leech's bite has to be more like a general anesthetic to match the description. I'm trying to work backwards from the observed effect - i.e. the victim can not notice a giant blood-sucking invertebrate is attached to them. That suggests the leech's saliva does more than block sensory nerves in the bitten area. To render the victim unaware of its presence it really has to affect their brains in some fashion. If I remember correctly, real-life leech saliva has an extremely complex biochemistry, so it is conceivable AD&D giant leech's have additional properties to help prevent their victims noticing them. Maybe their saliva is a complicated cocktail of anesthetics, sedatives and hallucinogens tailored to render a victim insensible.

Wakboth

11-26-2008 10:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I love these threads. Where else would you get a discussion about the feasibility of someone not noticing a giant leech sucking their blood, complete with people applying actual medical knowledge to it? :D

noisms

11-26-2008 10:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9654662)

The point is that the anesthetized character may not be able to wonder about things, since some forms of anesthetic can render the subject incapable of conscious thought. So, a giant leech bit character may be standing in the water with a vacant look on their face, rather than carrying on adventuring as if nothing happened while wondering why one leg is suddenly a hundred pounds heavier than the other.

Oh, I see what you mean. If that's the case, of course, giant leeches need to have some sort of paralysis-causing mechanic too.

Kapten

11-26-2008 10:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9654705)

Perfectly true. My thinking is that a giant leech's bite has to be more like a general anesthetic to match the description. I'm trying to work backwards from the observed effect - i.e. the victim can not notice a giant blood-sucking invertebrate is attached to them. That suggests the leech's saliva does more than block sensory nerves in the bitten area. To render the victim unaware of its presence it really has to affect their brains in some fashion. If I remember correctly, real-life leech saliva has an extremely complex biochemistry, so it is conceivable AD&D giant leech's have additional properties to help prevent their victims noticing them. Maybe their saliva is a complicated cocktail of anesthetics, sedatives and hallucinogens tailored to render a victim insensible.

I'm definitely OK with some kind of poison that leads to specific neglect that goes for 3' leeches, sort of like the neglect people with rightside cerebral vascular infarctions get but applied to leeches instead of the left side of the body. Actually, it's kind of a neat idea; that would mean that the leech could be visible for the victim, yet the victim isn't aware of it. Both scary and with a certain amount of gallow humour ;).

It could mean that a guy could be walking down the road like nothing is happening while being killed by two giant leeches attached to his torso. If I ever do a 1e/2e- campaign, I will use leeches like that in a horror-themed adventure :)

Kapten

11-26-2008 10:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9655296)

Oh, I see what you mean. If that's the case, of course, giant leeches need to have some sort of paralysis-causing mechanic too.

Not necessarily, see my answer above. It's pseudoscience, but it's not entirely inconcievable IRL (well, practically speaking it is, but the phenomenon neglect definitely exists).

noisms

11-27-2008 12:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Leprechaun

Ah, 'tis a Leprechaun, begorra. How now brown cow. Etc.

First point of business: Leprechauns are rumoured to be a hybrid of halflings and pixies! I never heard that before and must have missed that sentence back in the day. Weird to imagine Bilbo getting it on with Tinkerbell, but hey, if that's what floats their boats. More unusual exception based design in the opening paragraph, with the revelation that 30% of male leprechauns have beards. Next time you plan a leprechaun encounter, don't forget to roll that d100 to find out the clean-shaven to hirsute ratio.

Of all the annoying AD&D monsters, Leprechauns are the most annoying in my opinion, although that could be a

biprodukt of my extensive experience with the various 'band roguelike computer games, in which Leprechauns breed explosively and rapidly take over a level of the dungeon. Most just steal your gold and items, but others cast curses or fling mana bolts; Leprechaun in a 'band game is like a big sign saying "Get the hell out of Dodge." That said, there must be something to my gut reaction; any monster description in the MM which includes the phrase 'fun loving' is bound to be a complete pain in the arse.

Leprechauns are all about stealing valuable objects, which they can do with a flat 75% chance. There is a 25% chance that they will drop the object on pursuit, but will mislead captors about the true nature of the treasure if they are caught in their lair (10%) chance. Two paragraphs in, and already four weird exception-based-design concepts have cropped up - guess I spoke too soon about the Leech holding the record.

Leprechauns can also grant three limited wishes if somebody manages to get their hands on their gold. They will then tempt the target into asking for a fourth wish, whereupon the first three wishes will be reversed. Kind of ridiculous, but also kind of cool in that fairy-story way that occasionally sneaks into AD&D.

The main plot hook for Leprechauns is, I suppose, the Leprechaun King, whose existence is hinted at. Another low-grade adventure idea would be a Leprechaun stealing a treasured item of either one of the PCs or an adventure dispenser character, and ending up leading a wild goose chase all across the land.

demiurge1138

11-27-2008 12:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My friend Bowen had a "special guest" character that he played whenever he swung by a game but didn't have an actual character. That would be the ethereal leprechaun. Visible to only one of the PCs, the ethereal leprechaun would jig furiously, make sarcastic comments, and generally make that one PC question his sanity. He only pulled this in one of my games once, but I heard stories from other DMs...

6inTruder

11-27-2008 07:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9655858)

*Leprechauns are all about stealing valuable objects, which they can do with a flat 75% chance. There is a 25% chance that they will drop the object on pursuit, but will mislead captors about the true nature of the treasure if they are caught in their lair (10%) chance. Two products in an already four weird exception-based-design concepts - **guess I spoke too soon about the Leech holding the record.***

Just wait for the Slug, Giant...

noisms

11-27-2008 07:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9657588)
Just wait for the Slug, Giant...

We're still a way away from that one. Too bad I didn't keep track of any of the other entries, but we'll put Leech and Leprechaun in provisional joint first place for now.

Wakboth

11-27-2008 09:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The lack of leprechauns, brownies and other twee, annoying fairies is one of the best things about 3e and 4e. Pixies, nixies and grigs I can take, but I draw the line at leprechauns (preferably with a+5 *vorp*al pen).

(If nothing else, they stick out horribly in any setting that doesn't include a faux-Ireland.)

YojimboC

11-28-2008 12:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I never used leprechauns. Actually, if nothing else, this thread has shown me how unvaried and undaring my monster choices have been throughout my DMing career.

But leprechauns... I guess I'm just a little too Irish to have used them in a game. They're too ridiculous... too *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*... too Lucky Charms. I can't see them as a credible threat to a group of adventurers (certainly not the faux badass twinkles that we ran in 2nd Edition).

Conversely, these days, the idea of cannibalistic little fairies obsessed with cobbling shoes and stealing gold sounds kind of cool. But I would have to tweak the traditional leprechaun in order to use them at all -- they're just too damn goofy otherwise.

Kakita Kojiro

11-28-2008 06:08 AM

I think it's the *name* Leprechaun that is going to snap everyone's disbelief suspenders. You tell players they're being attacked by leprechauns, and suddenly it's wall-to-wall *Lucky Charms* jokes. Call 'em cobblergrues or something, though, and you might get them worried that these anklebiters are going to gnaw off their feet to run off with their footwear, because these fey only wear shoes freshly soaked in blood.

Wakshaani

11-28-2008 10:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well, for a plot thread, here's a couple off teh top of me wee noggin.

1) A young Leprechaun gets caught by the PCs and teh demand a wish. He'd love to! Only one problem... he can only do three at a time. Turns out that Baron Goodfellow caught him a few years ago and wished to be powerful, wealthy, and beloved by all. "What? Baron Goodfellow? Why, he's a GREAT leader!" "See? Worked like a charm!" Thing is, he was too smart to make a FOURTH wish, so, he gets to keep everything and, until he does, the young 'Chaun has nary a wish to grant! He tells teh PCs that the Good Baron is, in fact, an evil and ruthless man (Which they don't believe ...

that wish sure is something!) and that, if they can get him to make just *one* *more* *wish*, he can turn him back to normal. (And then, in theory, give teh PCs THEIR wishes. But he plans on trying to duck out of that obligation, somehow. And, of course, he might be telling a lie about Goodfellow's roots. Then again, he might be telling teh truth! Which is worse?)

2) Bonnie Bobbie was teh favorite son of Rainbow Village. Every morning he'd set up his pot of gold in a different place, and every morning they'd be greeted by a rainbow, as long as no one went and found where he'd hid it... this agreement gave teh village a name, and it's worked like a charm for a hundred years! Trouble is, when they woke up a week ago, there was no rainbow ... and hasn't been one since! No one's seen Bonnie Bobby, either, and teh town's more worried that their good friend is missing, hurt, or worse, then they are teh rainbow being gone. What happened to him? Was he nabbed? Did he have a hundred year agreement which ended? Did someone not know the rule about never finding teh pot of gold and snatch some, ending the truce? And what does *any* of this have to do with teh Bullywugs that've suddenly turned up? The Mayor of Rainbow Village needs help!

noisms

11-28-2008 08:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9661476)

Well, for a plot thread, here's a couple off teh top of me wee noggin.

*1) A young Leprechaun gets caught by the PCs and teh demand a wish. He'd love to! Only one problem... he can onl do trhee at a time. Turns out that Baron Goodfellow caught him a few years ago and wished to be powerful, wealthy, and beloved by all. "What? Baron Goodfellow? Why, he's a GREAT leader!" "See? Worked like a charm!" Thing is, he was too smart to make a FOURTH wish, so, he gets to keep everything and, until he does, the young 'Chaun has nary a wish to grant! He tells teh PCs that the Good Baron is, in fact, an evil and ruthless man (Which they don't believe ... that wish sure is something!) and that, if they can get him to make just *one* *more* *wish*, he can turn him back to normal. (And then, in theory, give teh PCs THEIR wishes. But he plans on trying to duck out of that obligation, somehow. And, of course, he might be telling a lie about Goodfellow's roots. Then again, he might be telling teh truth! Which is worse?)*

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'Tis some feckin' fine ideas ye have t'ere son, begorra.

JRM

11-29-2008 01:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9655296)

Oh, I see what you mean. If that's the case, of course, giant leeches need to have some sort of paralysis-causing mechanic too.

No, I deliberately omitted paralysis since if a giant leech paralyzed its warm-blooded prey they're likely to fall in water (the leech's preferred habitat) and drown. This would be against the leech's interests because:

1) The leech would likely have trouble getting blood from a dead victim (IIRC they don't so much suck blood as let their victim's own blood-pressure do the work. If the victim heart stops beating because they've drowned they won't have blood pressure.)

2) If the victim leaves alive, the leech (or another like it) may get more blood from it at a later date.

JRM

11-29-2008 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9655380)

I'm definitely OK with some kind of poison that leads to specific neglect that goes for 3' leeches, sort of like the neglect people with rightside cerebral vascular infarctions get but applied to leeches instead of the left side of the body. Actually, it's kind of a neat idea; that would mean that the leech could be visible for the victim, yet the victim isn't aware of it. Both scary and with a certain amount of gallow humour ;).

It could mean that a guy could be walking down the road like nothing is happening while being killed by two giant leeches attached to his torso. If I ever do a 1e/2e- campaign, I will use leeches like that in a horror- themed adventure :)

Yes that's more or less my take on it, except I was thinking the venom may mainly worked on the victim's somatic awareness rather than his visual awareness, so if they actually could see the leech they may realize something was screwy. (That's just to reflect what I remember of how giant leeches worked in AD&D. My understanding was a leech could attach itself to someone and they'd carry it about on their back or drag it through the water by their leg without noticing, but once they actually looked at the dang thing they usually realized they'd been taken for a sucker. I'm just trying to fit the symptoms to fit the bill.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9655383)

Not necessarily, see my answer above. It's pseudoscience, but it's not entirely inconcievable IRL (well, practically speaking it is, but the phenomenon neglect defenitly exists).

No disagreement their, it may be theoretically possible to fiddle with a human's brain chemistry to create such an effect but it's highly unlikely. Plus, from what I know of real life animals that do this are all parasites with highly specific victims (e.g. wasp larvae that control the behaviour of a species of ant, baby tapeworms that make mice find the scent of cat attractive etc). So, the giant leech venom would probably *only* work on human(oid)s, which could quickly lead to their extinction, since if it only fed on humans then swamp-dwelling folk would quickly learn to check for them and kill them when found. Unless they started worshipping the leeches for their mind-altering toxins, or selling them to drug-dens that is.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9655858)

Leprechaun

Of all the annoying AD&D monsters, Leprechauns are the most annoying in my opinion.

You missed out what is arguably their most annoying ability - see that little bit of text that says they can "polymorph nonliving objects". In 1st edition leprechauns could use *Polymorph Any Object* **at will** so long as it only affected non-living items.

That's an 8th level spell! Just think of the possibilities.:p

When a player in an old campaign of mine annoyed a clan of leprechauns (long story) they turned all his fighter's weapons and armour into foam rubber, his clothes into skimpy tutus, his shoes & undergarments into custard, and his fort into blancmange - all the time the little blighters were dancing around *invisibly* and using *ventriloquism* to sing about giving him his "just desserts!" :D

It's just lucky they're pacifists, they could do horrible damage with an unlimited supply of Polymorph Any (inanimate) Object.

Although their power to create illusions at will is nothing to be sneered at, either.

At least once you get a *see invisibility* going they are easy to get rid of. Only 2-5 hit points, remember.

The Last Conformist

11-30-2008 04:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9618780)

Lamias are basically centaurs, but with a woman and lion rather than a man/horse. That makes them rather like an old race from the Fighting Fantasy books called the felinaur, which I always liked. (Better than the boring old Wemics.) It also puts them into that rather odd legendary creature category of Female Creatures Which Are Really Horrible And Mean. I quite like that category, because based on long life experience and a few years of marriage I am well aware (like most men) that females definitely are horrible and mean... But it does make you wonder about The Ancients and their ideas. There aren't a heck of a lot of Male monsters which eat people - unless you count things like Hydras and what have you, who aren't really 'male' in the same sense that Lamias or Medusae are female.

I've always assumed the Lernean Hydra was a female, probably for no reason but that "hydra" is a feminine word.

demiurge1138

11-30-2008 03:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It should come to no surprise that Casey, same guy as who wanted to play the halfling wereleech ninja, also wants to play a leprechaun.

JRM

11-30-2008 08:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9667141)

I've always assumed the Lernean Hydra was a female, probably for no reason but that "hydra" is a feminine word.

I believe you're right about that, I've seen some translations of classical sources use "her" [when talking about the Hydra](#). Although I have negligible knowledge of ancient Greek, do we have any classical scholars around here who can enlighten us?

noisms

12-02-2008 12:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9669353)

I believe you're right about that, I've seen some translations of classical sources use "her" when talking about the Hydra. Although I have negligible knowledge of ancient Greek, do we have any classical scholars around here who can enlighten us?

Hmm. Well that just confirms it. To the Greeks, female = maneater. ;)

JRM

12-02-2008 05:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9673871)

Hmm. Well that just confirms it. To the Greeks, female = maneater. ;)

Now, now noisms. You now perfectly well the ancient Greeks believed in equal opportunity anthropophagy.:D

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Leucrotta

An ugly quadruped with a mean bite, the Leucrotta is in my experience a very rarely encountered D&D beastie. It's an above average monster though. As well as having a nice little special ability (shield and armour destruction) it has the interesting shtick of ventriloquism/voice imitation. It uses this to lure its prey into traps, which is a much more worthwhile ploy, I think, than the hoary old 'pretend to be an old woman/damsel in distress' idea. The idea of a monstrous horse with the voice of a terrified child is also damn creepy when you think about it.

There are also some adventure hooks in the entry: mages use Leucrotta hides for *boots of striding and springing*, and the creature's saliva is an antidote for love potions. It seems a stretch to imagine somebody going to such lengths to avoid a love potion as to slay a Leucrotta and drink its saliva, but there you go.

The Leucrotta entry is also notable for seeing the reappearance of our old friends, the sages. Here they are speculating that "the leucrotta is an unnatural abnormality, an aberration spawned by some demented power or archmage." Who that demented power or archmage is, is up to individual DMs to decide.

Leucrotta are so loathsome that not even druids would make the argument that they are worth keeping around. That raises the interesting question of how druids view other horrible monsters like Manticores, Cockatrices and Catoblepas. Are there Catoblepas rights activist druids out there in the world?

Wakshaani

12-02-2008 09:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

You know, I always **did** want a 'gestalt' spell, where you could combine two lifeforms together to see what'd happen, or at least a 'magical Experiment' type spell, to create things like this.

I mean, OwlBars had to come from somewhere, right?

Sleeper

12-02-2008 09:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9677688)
I mean, OwlBars had to come from somewhere, right?

Chicago's nightlife? :)

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9677643)

Leucrotta

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I liked the illustration of a Leucrotta in the 1st edition MM far more than the Monstrous Compendium's. The 2nd edition illustration just looks badly drawn, with poor anatomy. While you could argue that a Leucrotta drawing is supposed to be ugly and look like the beast has been ineptly assembled from bits and pieces of other animals, it just doesn't appeal to me.

Oh, and a leucrotta is supposed to look like a monstrous **stag** (with lion- and badger-bits), not a horse.

Anyhows, as for the description saying "they have no practical use" they do have an obvious ecological role as a scavenger, chewing up the tougher parts of corpses and thereby disposing of them. Why don't the druids think of them as being the mountain-dwelling equivalent of hyenas?

The rule about saving vs the "horrible stench" in their lairs is a bit odd. Surely lots of AD&D monsters would have lairs filled with the decomposing remains of their victims so why pick on the leucrotta, was it to emphasize the monster's uncleanly, ugly nature or its scavenging?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9677688)

*You know, I always *did* want a 'gestalt' spell, where you could combine two lifeforms together to see what'd*

happen, or at least a 'magical Experiment' type spell, to create things like this.

I mean, OwlBars had to come from somewhere, right?

Wasn't there a Dragon Magazine article with such spells, maybe Magical Crossbreeds in Dragon #243 by Jonathan M. Richards? I've got the magazine around somewhere, but don't have time to check.

DMH

12-02-2008 10:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There wasn't a spell in 243, but there are several in 237 under the merlane class in the article Wild at Heart. Still my favorite class/kit.

Wak, Green Ronin's Advanced Bestiary has an amalgam template for 3.5. It fuses any two creatures.

The Last Conformist

12-02-2008 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Taken as a whole, the MM surely implies the existence of a Crossbreed Anything With Anything Else spell.

(Hill giants, for example, are the result of crossbreeding giants with hills.)

Wakboth

12-02-2008 11:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9677643)

Leucrotta

An ugly quadruped with a mean bite, the Leucrotta is in my experience a very rarely encountered D&D beastie. It's an above average monster though. As well as having a nice little special ability (shield and armour destruction) it has the interesting shtick of ventriloquism/voice imitation. It uses this to lure its prey into traps, which is a much more worthwhile ploy, I think, than the hoary old 'pretend to be an old woman/damsel in distress' idea. The idea of a monstrous horse with the voice of a terrified child is also damn creepy when you think about it.

IIRC, leucrotta as a mythic critter is based on garbled accounts of hyenas, who do make creepy laughing sounds, aren't exactly the most conventionally good-looking critters, and chew up bones and such.

Quote:

There are also some adventure hooks in the entry: mages use Leucrotta hides for *boots of striding and springing*,

and the creature's saliva is an antidote for love potions. It seems a stretch to imagine somebody going to such lengths to avoid a love potion as to slay a Leucrotta and drink its saliva, but there you go.

Didn't the MM entry note that there has been a dearth of volunteers to test the saliva's properties? :D

The Last Conformist

12-02-2008 11:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9678128)

IIRC, leucrotta as a mythic critter is based on garbled accounts of hyenas, who do make creepy laughing sounds, aren't exactly the most conventionally good-looking critters, and chew up bones and such.

The leucrotta (leocrocotta, leocrocuta) was asserted by Pliny the Elder to be the offspring of a lion and a [crocotta](#), the later apparently refering to some sort of hyena.

(This, of course, is more evidence for the Crossbreed Anything With Anything Else spell, altho lions and hyenas are fairly closely related compared to many other examples.)

Kakita Kojiro

12-03-2008 01:38 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9678192)

The leucrotta (leocrocotta, leocrocuta) was asserted by Pliny the Elder to be the offspring of a lion and a crocotta, th later apparently refering to some sort of hyena.

Lions and hyenas, of course, both being well-known mountain dwellers. Thus explaining the leucrotta's mountain habitat in D&D. Er... or something.

Wakshaani

12-03-2008 02:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9677884)

There wasn't a spell in 243, but there are several in 237 under the merlane class in the article Wild at Heart. Still my favorite class/kit.

Wak, Green Ronin's Advanced Bestiary has an amalgam template for 3.5. It fuses any two creatures.

Don't have that boko *or* that issue of Dragon.

...

Lo, must I shop!

Littleredfox

12-03-2008 08:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9677894)

Taken as a whole, the MM surely implies the existence of a Crossbreed Anything With Anything Else spell.

Ritual of Twaining.

First published in Imagine and then in the Wizards Spell Compendium.

JRM

12-03-2008 04:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9678192)

The leucrotta (leocrocotta, leocrocota) was asserted by Pliny the Elder to be the offspring of a lion and a crocotta, th later apparently refering to some sort of hyena.

(This, of course, is more evidence for the Crossbreed Anything With Anything Else spell, altho lions and hyenas are fairly closely related compared to many other examples.)

Well going by Pliny and AD&D, lions appear to be the orcs of the animal kingdom - they'll breed with anything. Ant-lions and manticores spring to mind, evidence the King of the Beasts will cross-breed with arthropods! Plus fish, how else do you explain sealions?

Well, at least they're not as bad as dragons in 3rd edition.:p

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9677688)

I mean, OwlBars had to come from somewhere, right?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9677761)
Chicago's nightlife? :)

Well, some sort of intoxication would help explain how and why two very disparate creatures got it on.* Now I'm imagining a lioness and a salmon waking up in a swimming pool together, both thinking "Oh my head, what did I do last night!"

There's a Dungeon magazine that uses that very explanation to explain the origins of a half-dragon giant crocodile, so it can't just be me.:o

JRM

12-03-2008 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9677884)

There wasn't a spell in 243, but there are several in 237 under the merlane class in the article Wild at Heart. Still my favorite class/kit.

Wak, Green Ronin's Advanced Bestiary has an amalgam template for 3.5. It fuses any two creatures.

Ta, I remembered it was around the two-hundreds but couldn't face digging through my back-issues to find it so I just did a search to find which issue had duckbunnies in it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Littleredfox (Post 9680362)

Ritual of Twaining.

First published in Imagine and then in the Wizards Spell Compendium.

Ooh I'd forgotten about that Imagine article! I've got that stashed away in a cupboard to. T'was an excellent magazine.

Of course, it's a fairly obvious idea to have rules for magical hybrids - 3rd edition has the Tauric template, for example, but I'm not sure whether it has an official spell to create one.

kelvingreen

12-04-2008 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9677808)

I liked the illustration of a Leucrotta in the 1st edition MM far more than the Monstrous Compendium's. The 2nd edition illustration just looks badly drawn, with poor anatomy. While you could argue that a Leucrotta drawing is supposed to be ugly and look like the beast has been ineptly assembled from bits and pieces of other animals, it just doesn't appeal to me.

Even the 2e picture is better than that awful 3.Xe version, which not only looks awful, but betrays its source (a Photoshopped image of a greyhound race) far too clearly.

Although it does make me think of a bunch of dwarfs heading down to the leucrotta track on an evening to bet their mining wages on the races and drink lots of poor quality, but more importantly cheap, ale.

noisms

12-04-2008 10:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lich

Liches eh? Where would we be without them? Okay, so the pictures seem to portray a pair of cross dressing mummies camping it up, but Liches were obviously designed to be Big Bads and being Big Bads is something they do very well. Not only are they equivalent to 18th level wizards at the least, they have a whole host of other nasty undead abilities and a special 'phylactery' which stores their soul and allows them to come back again and again for revenge. Sort of a D&D bad guy version of a save game function.

Liches love to chew up the scenery. Everything about them screams 'ham', from the fact that they like to make their lairs in 'ominous fortified areas' to their liking for Hammer-horror pseudonyms like 'The Black Hand' or 'The Forgotten King'. Liches are always voiced by Episode III-era Ian McDiarmid; Christopher Lloyd does the Demiliches.

One concern of mine with Liches is that they're overused. As a DM you can spend an age setting up a mysterious horrible BBEG for the characters to battle against, only for a crushing anticlimax when its identity is revealed and the players collectively sigh 'Oh, it's a Lich'. Use them sparingly, and make them really evil - otherwise they're trite.

Demilich

The Demilich section of the Lich entry has always threatened to drain my will to live; I never seem to be able to plough through it. In this respect it is oddly reminiscent of the Dracolich entry, which as you may remember I simply lacked the necessary fortitude to go through with summarising. Suffice to say the bit about Demiliches is long and insanely complicated. A taster:

Quote:

If the final resting place of a demilich's remains are entered, the dust which was once its body will rise up and assume a man-like shape. In the case of the oldest demiliches (25%), the shape will advance and threaten, but dissipate without attacking in 3 rounds unless attacked. Younger demiliches (75%) still retain a link to their remains, however, and will form with the powers of a wraith. This dust form cannot be turned. In addition, it can store energy from attacks and use this power to engage its foes. If the dust form is attacked, each point of damage which is delivered to it is converted to an energy point. Since the demilich will fall back and seem to suffer injury from each attack (though none is actually inflicted), its attackers are likely to press on in their attempts to destroy it. Once the demilich has acquired 50 energy points, it will assume a manifestation which looks much like the lich's earlier undead form and has the powers and abilities of a ghost, but which cannot be turned. If anyone touches the skull it will rise into the air and turn to face the most powerful of the intruders (a spell user will be chosen over a non-spell user). Instantly, it unleashes a howl which acts as a death ray, affecting all creatures

within a 20' radius of the skull. Those who fail to save vs. death are permanently dead.
On the next round, the demilich will employ another manner of attack. In order to attain the status of a demilich, a lich must have replaced 5-8 (1d4+4) of its teeth with gems. Each of these gems now serves as a powerful magical device which can trap the soul of its adversaries...

See what I mean?

Archlich

As 'rare as Roc's teeth', Archliches are seemingly non-evil Liches or those who were formerly priests rather than mages. These were rumours until 'recently', but they have apparently been verified. When, where and by whom, it is not given for us to know.

YojimboC

12-05-2008 12:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Didn't the demilich first see print in *The Tomb of Horrors*?

I dig liches. Evil undead spellcasters - what's not to love? Surround 'em with death knights and an army of orcs and you've basically got Sauron.

The Last Conformist

12-05-2008 12:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

If one crosses a lich and a demilich, does one get a three-quarter-lich?

noisms

12-05-2008 12:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9687865)
If one crosses a lich and a demilich, does one get a three-quarter-lich?

I think it makes a semi-demi-hemi ~~quaver~~ lich.

demiurge1138

12-05-2008 01:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Christopher Lee? Demiliches in my mind always possess a high-pitched cackle.

It should come as no surprise by now that my player Casey had a character who was due to become a lich at 20th level. Like, it was a class feature. This was a problem, as the PCs were on the path to fight the God of Undeath, and everyone was concerned that as soon as Casey turned into a lich, he would immediately be controlled by said aforementioned God and turned against them. So they murdered him while he was busily fighting something else, with great efficiency and verve. Then stole his stuff and threw his body into a sphere of annihilation.

I've only seen a few PVP kills in my day, but this one stands out to me as the best planned.

Wakboth

12-05-2008 02:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It also sounds like one of the best justified ones. :)

Yah, liches are neat, but they're very easily overused. (Vampires, the other big-name undead, have a ton of vulnerabilities that every player knows by heart by now - stakes, garlic, holy symbols, and most importantly sunlight - and are also overused.)

kelvingreen

12-05-2008 02:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9687280)

As 'rare as Roc's teeth', Archliches are seemingly non-evil Liches or those who were formerly priests rather than mages. These were rumours until 'recently', but they have apparently been verified. When, where and by whom, it is not given for us to know.

Sages, obviously.

Usually when that kind of language is employed, it means that the "recent" events occurred in a module. It's often something along the lines of "a group of nameless heroes did X, Y and Z", referring to something players might have done in the course of the adventure, but obviously unable to give names. My bet is that an Archlich appears as an NPC in some module published sometime around the time the entry was written.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9688229)

Yah, liches are neat, but they're very easily overused. (Vampires, the other big-name undead, have a ton of vulnerabilities that every player knows by heart by now - stakes, garlic, holy symbols, and most importantly sunlight and are also overused.)

Well, you can always chuck out a bunch of those vulnerabilities; Dracula had no problem with sunlight until the films came along, and Max the Video Store Vampire loved garlic. It's easy to get rid of or modify the vampire's weaknesses but keep it recognisably a vampire; I'd say the bloodsucking is key, as is a certain level of OCD, but everything else is fair game. I'm sure it's possible to do the same for the lich, if one can identify what the essential lich features are.

demiurge1138

12-05-2008 05:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9688340)

I'm sure it's possible to do the same for the lich, if one can identify what the essential lich features are.

The essential features of the lich are:

1. Spellcasting
2. Immortality, via a phylactery or other cheat death device
3. Megalomania

I remember a Dragon magazine article in the early 3.0 days about how to synergize monsters for fun and profit. Things like a medusa with grimlocks for guards, because they're immune to her gaze, stuff like that. Their capstone was a lich whose phylactery was the gem used to cast *trap the soul...* on the tarrasque. Kill the lich for good, unleash an even more potent destructive force on the world.

That's the sort of thing I mean by "megalomania". Utter dickery, just because they can. Remember that it was a lich who built the Tomb of Horrors. They've got a lot of time on their hands, and hate everything.

DMH

12-05-2008 05:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9688007)

Christopher Lee? Demiliches in my mind always possess a high-pitched cackle.

He wrote Christopher Lloyd.

I never care for megalomaniac liches. Ones that have spent centuries on some research that is now useless because of changes in the world being pissed off and taking out on some village is okay (for a decade or so- when they settle down).

The point I like using, if I use them at all, is they can be a source of new spells and magic items (both those forgotten and brand new). Getting them to sell the spells or way of making the items may be very difficult, but rarely impossible.

noisms

12-05-2008 06:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9688905)
He wrote Christopher Lloyd.

I was picturing a combination of the Klingon guy from Star Trek III and Judge Doom from Who Framed Roger Rabbit?

Wakshaani

12-05-2008 08:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I have to be careful wit Liches ... on the one hand, they can't be TOO overwhelming, despite having a century to work on projects. On teh other, they have to be scary because, otherwise?

That way lies Skeletor.

demiurge1138

12-05-2008 08:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9689160)
I was picturing a combination of the Klingon guy from Star Trek III and Judge Doom from Who Framed Roger Rabbit:

Sorry. Then yeah, totally. Right on the money.

Inyssius

12-05-2008 08:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Generally, I envision liches as falling into two basic types:

Xykon;

and that paranoid-schizophrenic conspiracy nut with all the contingency plans, living in his concrete bunker and hatching intricate plots and forming incomprehensible theories about the nature of everything.

Nathan P. Mahney

12-05-2008 09:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9689446)

I have to be careful wit Liches ... on the one hand, they can't be TOO overwhelming, despite having a century to work on projects. On teh other, they have to be scary because, otherwise?

That way lies Skeletor.

My next Lich is totally going to wield a ram's-head staff.

JRM

12-05-2008 11:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9687280)

[u]Archlich

As 'rare as Roc's teeth', Archliches are seemingly non-evil Liches or those who were formerly priests rather than mages. These were rumours until 'recently', but they have apparently been verified. When, where and by whom, it is not given for us to know.

I suspect this came about because there are a few non-evil lichs in the Forgotten Realms setting (IIRC they're of the "neutral crazy" variety). As for priests, you've been able to have cleric-liches since 1st edition, but nobody seems to make anything of them.

JRM

12-05-2008 11:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9689526)

Generally, I envision lichs as falling into two basic types:

Xykon;

and that paranoid-schizophrenic conspiracy nut with all the contingency plans, living in his concrete bunker and hatching intricate plots and forming incomprehensible theories about the nature of everything.

Oh yes, Xykon was a revelation. I never did use lichs since, apart from my PCs being too low level, they were just so much of a cliché as the "immortal schemer hiding in their tombs". But the more gonzo approach of The Order of the Stick's Xykon offers lots of ideas. After all, if you've got vast magical powers and cannot die why not take on risks that would be crazy for mortals?

Xykon's behaviour makes more sense when you remember he's a sorcerer, not a wizard, which is perfectly legal in 3rd edition. He's got a high Charisma to boss people around with, but only a mediocre Intelligence - which would also explain a lot about Skeletor, come to think of it.:cool:

kelvingreen

12-06-2008 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My favourite *D&D* Lich is the Random Lich from the *urban* night-time encounters table in, I think, the 1e *DMG*. That's an unlucky night for the players to be prowling the streets!

Kakita Kojiro

12-06-2008 11:28 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9692284)

My favourite D&D Lich is the Random Lich from the urban night-time encounters table in, I think, the 1e DMG. That's an unlucky night for the players to be prowling the streets!

Curse you, you've caused me to flashback to *Dungeons & Dragons II: Wrath of the Dragon God*!! :mad:

Not only is there a lich in that movie -- *very* bad makeup job*, and I'm hazy on what the heck he had to do with the plot, anyway -- but the wandering monster chart being used by the DM apparently had the PCs run into dozens and dozens and dozens of specters in the random woodlands they were passing through.

(And, yes, while viewing it you could *almost* see the DM's hand in setting up stuff.)

* probably because they spent all their sfx budget on CGI darkmantles. *darkmantles*, people! tsk.

Matthew L. Martin

12-06-2008 12:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9691689)

I suspect this came about because there are a few non-evil lichs in the Forgotten Realms setting (IIRC they're of the "neutral crazy" variety). As for priests, you've been able to have cleric-liches since 1st edition, but nobody seems to make anything of them.

Archliches came from Spelljammer, actually; Nigel Findley cites them as appearing in SJR1 *Lost Ships* in his article "The Mind of the Vampire" in DRAGON #162.

Priestly lichs get a chapter in *Van Richten's Guide to the Lich*.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9692284)

My favourite D&D Lich is the Random Lich from the urban night-time encounters table in, I think, the 1e DMG. That's an unlucky night for the players to be prowling the streets!

I always figured that was more a sign that liches were at least minimally tolerated members of the community. Nobody likes them, but they're not like vampires sucking blood and seducing sons and daughters and killing people every other day just to survive. Liches may be distasteful and distrusted, but if they wear hooded cloaks and restrict their activities to the night, nobody really raises much of a fuss. So, unless you really did something silly to aggravate the lich, it's just like running into a reclusive and somewhat decrepit yet insanely powerful scholar.

noisms

12-06-2008 08:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Living Wall

After the Lich we have another over-the-top horror monster. The Living Wall is basically a collection of corpses cemented together into a wall, which grows by absorbing unfortunate trespassers. Whoever wrote the entry did a great job - the Ecology section is sheer unadulterated melodrama:

Quote:

A fact known only to one or two inhabitants of Ravenloft, is that living walls also arise as rare manifestations of Ravenloft's power, as responses to despair and dread. These walls are born in curses, midwived by death, and nurse on massacre.

The seed for such a living wall is planted when one sapient creature willfully entombs another in a wall. The hapless victim may be bound and walled alive in a rock niche on a windswept mountain trail, a sill in a fetid catacomb, a corner in an asylum, a cave wall, a mausoleum facade, or any other stone or brick wall. Once entombed, the victim will suffocate, dehydrate, or starve in utter darkness and solitude. But even this agony is not sufficient to wake the land's attention -- the entombed creature, in his terror, must curse his slayer, screaming loudly enough for his voice to carry beyond his tomb of stone. Only then does the land hear his agony.

When the victim dies, his life force is trapped within the wall. As he struggles to escape, his life energy becomes soiled by the soot of his screams and curses, which thickly coat the inside of his stone sarcophagus. In a matter of days, madness corrupts the trapped life force, changing it to chaotic evil.

At this point, the bodies of any creatures that have died within 100 yards of the wall within the last month rise, shamle to the wall, and meld into it. Even corpses that have been buried will dig their way to the surface and converge upon the wall. Although the wall retains its previous appearance, it is no longer stone, but a gray and rotting bulwark of limbs, ribs, hands, bones, and faces, twisted and fused together. Bodies of any subsequent deaths occurring within 100 yards also rise and wander to the wall for assimilation.

Most cultures, and all good-aligned characters, attempt to destroy these creations wherever they are found. But many of these assaults merely strengthen the wall with deposits of more corpses.

Great stuff. "Born in curses, midwived by death, and nursed on massacre"! It's like something from a Brian Lumley novel. I love that uber-gothic Ravenloft shtick. Although officially I disapprove of all setting-specific monster descriptions in the Monstrous Manual.

Living Walls shouldn't need much of a reason to exist in an adventure except as a grotesque end-of-level type monster. But there's an interesting idea for a plot hook in that the abomination will dissipate if it gets the chance to destroy its creator. Low-level PCs, unable to deal with the Living Wall themselves, seeking out the creator and kidnapping him in order to feed him to it?

(un)reason

12-06-2008 08:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ahh, living walls. They're one of the great examples of infinite scaling monsters, along with shambling mounds. Mess with them wrongly, and they just get even scarier. You can see why twink wizard would want to build one. The problem, of course, is keeping control of them.

JRM

12-06-2008 09:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9695197)

I always figured that was more a sign that liches were at least minimally tolerated members of the community. Nobody likes them, but they're not like vampires sucking blood and seducing sons and daughters and killing people every other day just to survive. Liches may be distasteful and distrusted, but if they wear hooded cloaks and restrict their activities to the night, nobody really raises much of a fuss. So, unless you really did something silly to aggravate the lich, it's just like running into a reclusive and somewhat decrepit yet insanely powerful scholar.

Absolutely! Why do these bloody adventurers think that just because a *detect evil* goes 'ping' they can kill people on the street, or have the right to assault an innocent undead while it's going about its lawful business in town.

An encounter like that could be a great roleplaying opportunity. What's the lich up to? Is it furthering an insidious plot to conquer the Kingdom, or just shopping, catching a show or visiting its still living buddies in the Mages' Guild? Liches have private lives too, you know. It gets very dull sitting in your crypt all day.

Wakboth

12-07-2008 02:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9689446)

That way lies Skeletor.

Funny that you should say that... :D

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9695285)

Great stuff. "Born in curses, midwived by death, and nursed on massacre"! It's like something from a Brian Lumley novel. I love that uber-gothic Ravenloft shtick. Although officially I disapprove of all setting-specific monster descriptions in the Monstrous Manual.

Oh, yes. *This* is how you pick and choose monsters from a setting-based Monstrous Compendium, not kirre...

Quote:

Living Walls shouldn't need much of a reason to exist in an adventure except as a grotesque end-of-level type monster. But there's an interesting idea for a plot hook in that the abomination will dissipate if it gets the chance to destroy its creator. Low-level PCs, unable to deal with the Living Wall themselves, seeking out the creator and kidnapping him in order to feed him to it?

I was thinking of doing it the other way around, actually; low-level PCs kill the villain by luring him into the room where he entombed his wife (or his cat, or both), because he has no idea the wall there is now alive and thirsting for vengeance!

Kakita Kojiro

12-07-2008 03:14 AM

Er... if a Living Wall is created when someone *dies* all bricked up, and then adds *corpses* to itself to grow -- shouldn't it be an **UN**living Wall?

demiurge1138

12-07-2008 03:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9696161)

*Er... if a Living Wall is created when someone dies all bricked up, and then adds corpses to itself to grow -- shouldn't it be an **UN**living Wall?*

Well, yes, but that doesn't sound quite right.

I agree that living walls are up at the top of the list for setting-specific imports in the MM; that ecology scared the shit out of me when I was a wee one.

kelvingreen

12-07-2008 04:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9694492)

Curse you, you've caused me to flashback to Dungeons & Dragons II: Wrath of the Dragon God!! :mad:

Weeeeeell, it's better than the first one, at least!

Sleeper

12-07-2008 06:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9696293)

Weeeeeell, it's better than the first one, at least!

If you sit down and watch them both, one after the other, *Wrath of the Dragon God* takes on a certain *gravitas* and becomes a thing of wonder, of amazement, nigh unto *Ben Hur* or *Lawrence of Arabia* in sheer majesty and perfection.

Of course if you watch it by itself, it's merely eh not that bad.

JRM

12-07-2008 08:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9696624)

If you sit down and watch them both, one after the other, Wrath of the Dragon God takes on a certain gravitas and becomes a thing of wonder, of amazement, nigh unto Ben Hur or Lawrence of Arabia in sheer majesty and perfection

Of course if you watch it by itself, it's merely eh not that bad.

I agree with that, *Wrath of the Dragon God* is by no means a great film but it's so much better than the first one, and is "truer to D&D" (in my arrogant view) that I have little embarrassment in saying I like it. Although I am surely biased by my fond spot for a "good" trashy fantasy films - I enjoy Hawk the Slayer, The Sword and the Sorcerer and the (first) Beastmaster, for example.

Vultur10

12-08-2008 11:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I just found this series of threads, and it's awesome. Subscribed and rated 5 stars.

What's next, locathahs?

see

12-08-2008 11:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Matthew L. Martin (Post 9694628)

Archliches came from Spelljammer, actually; Nigel Findley cites them as appearing in SJR1 Lost Ships in his article "The Mind of the Vampire" in DRAGON #162.

That's true. And the author of SJR1?

Why, the creator of the Forgotten Realms, Ed Greenwood, importing an idea from his home Realms campaign.
(There was a specific mention of this in the Ed Greenwood forum over on candlekeep.com)

Wakboth

12-08-2008 03:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9700240)

I just found this series of threads, and it's awesome. Subscribed and rated 5 stars.

What's next, locathahs?

I think so. Salmon-men!

demiurge1138

12-08-2008 04:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9700755)

I think so. Salmon-men!

Nope. Lizards and lizardfolk first.

noisms

12-08-2008 05:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9700240)

I just found this series of threads, and it's awesome. Subscribed and rated 5 stars.

What's next, locathahs?

Thank you very much. Lizards are coming along next.

JasonK

12-08-2008 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Holy hell. I don't believe we're 19 pages into this and I missed it thus far!

Leesee... lost out on Kobolds (the gnome rivalry, btw, was just to keep the demihuman parallels strong: elves/orcs, dwarves/goblins, gnomes/kobolds), kuo toa (deep ones!) and lichs (truly some of the best BBEGs ever), but not a whole lot else.

Can't wait to see the rest. :)

~ jasön

Sleeper

12-08-2008 07:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

While we're not too far away, how exactly is "lich" pronounced? I remember a debate back in the day (maybe in *Dragon*?) between either "lick" or "like" and "litch". I've always pronounced it the last way, myself.

Vultur10

12-08-2008 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I'm pretty sure it's "litch", like in "lich gate", the gate to a graveyard. (It's the same word; "lich" is an old word for "corpse". The application to an undead being comes from Clark Ashton Smith, I think.)

Lukas Sjöström

12-08-2008 09:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've always said "lisch", but I'm a dirty furriner, so don't listen to me. As an aside, the Swedish word for "corpse" is still "lik", so I avoid any pronounciations that might confuse the two.

noisms

12-08-2008 09:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9701131)

I'm pretty sure it's "litch", like in "lich gate", the gate to a graveyard. (It's the same word; "lich" is an old word for "corpse". The application to an undead being comes from Clark Ashton Smith, I think.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lukas Sjöström (Post 9701455)

I've always said "lisch", but I'm a dirty furriner, so don't listen to me. As an aside, the Swedish word for "corpse" is still "lik", so I avoid any pronounciations that might confuse the two.

Obviously the two languages' shared Germanic roots are indicated by that. Leiche is a German word if I'm not mistaken.

For what it's worth, I pronounce it Litch.

Wakboth

12-08-2008 10:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've pronounced it as "likh", or "lich" with the "ch" from Scottish "Loch".

noisms

12-08-2008 11:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lizard

A rather perfunctory entry, which as usual with Real Animal entries in the MM refers to Giant versions of whatever creature is in the title. All the lizards are able to swallow opponents and keep them in their mouth, generally causing double damage per round until the victim is dead or released.

Fire Lizard

This is a 'false dragon', or wingless red dragon of animal-level intelligence. Like red dragons, they have a liking for treasure, and can breathe fire. Their eggs are worth 5,000 gp (the entry prints this twice - tut tut, proof readers) and the hatchlings 7,500. A welcome return to the egg-thief motif, there.

Giant Lizard

These are often domesticated by lizard men, and are fed on by black dragons, though otherwise they are rather dull. I prefer the idea of them being domesticated by something unexpected, like, I dunno, dwarves. Why do dwarves never ride things? It never made sense to me, and seems almost entirely based on the fact that Gimli didn't ride a horse.

Minotaur Lizard

These are lizards with horns 'like those of a minotaur'; this raises the obvious question: why not call them Bull Lizards? Disappointingly the horns are used to attract mates, and not to fight. Yawn.

Subterranean Lizard

This is the most interesting of the bunch, which really isn't saying a whole deal. Subterranean Lizards have suction feet, like geckoes, which enable them to walk upside down and climb sheer walls. Some are also able to shoot out their tongues like a chameleon, to drag victims into their maws.

demiurge1138

12-09-2008 01:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In recent months, I've gotten the idea for the a game in which the PCs get a map to a fantastic lost valley of dinosaurs. When they get there, the dinosaurs are actually giant lizards and crocodiles with fins and horns stuck to them, ala the shitty dinosaur movies of old.

Problem is, I have no idea what do to with that idea beyond that point.

Inyssius

12-09-2008 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Fin leeches?

6inTruder

12-09-2008 05:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9701893)

Lizard

No thoughts for the picture? I forgot to look it up this morning, but I swear the picture is based on a desert lizard... Which amused me as none of the Giant Lizards are from the desert.

Also, Gray Dwarves. They ride giant spiders.

edit: I think it may be a collard lizard? Oh, and while looking I found this:

<http://www.furiousscyllon.com/biomech/...ard-767769.jpg>

Sure that one is hand sized, but BIG, it'd look pretty cul.

The Last Conformist

12-09-2008 08:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9701523)

Obviously the two languages' shared Germanic roots are indicated by that. Leiche is a German word if I'm not mistaken.

For what it's worth, I pronounce it Litch.

Indeed, Sw. *lik*, Ge. *Leiche*, and En. "lich" are all cognate, and, outside of gamerdom, all mean the same thing. Your pronunciation is the historically justified one, whether or not it's the commonest one in the post-Gygaxian world.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9701893)

Why do dwarves never ride things? It never made sense to me, and seems almost entirely based on the fact that Gimli didn't ride a horse.

It may be because dwarves archetypically live subterraneously - miners and speleologists don't typically ride, at least not when underground.

see

12-09-2008 08:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Since lizardy kobolds ride giant weasels, mamillan gnomes should ride lizards.

Wakshaani

12-09-2008 08:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Sticky-footed subteranean lizards were eventually brought in as mounts for Drow.

Shocking in their non-listing is any sort of giant sand lizard and swamp-dwellers barely get any mention. Lake-dwellers none at all! 2nd ed needs a herpatologist, stat!

On another note, totally at random, one of teh things I did in my world to make humans stand out was that they were

one of teh *very* few races that ever domesticated animals. Wood Elves would be friendly with some and tend to them, but never DOMESTICATE any, High Elves would never stoop to such things, Dwarves never had any, and Orcs had no patience for it (Tho would sometimes raise giant warbeasts, like Hydras, through sheer intimidation and beatings.) Ony Goblins came close, with Wolfriding, but no other race ever had animals that would actually serve them.

Sounds a bit odd, but, it's kind of neat.

Vultur10

12-09-2008 03:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I never got what the deal was with the minotaur lizards. The Dragonlance SAGA book made them interestingly creepy with the in-character way it talked about their mimicking waterfalls, but here they're just ... huh?

And why no disease-carrying komodo dragon, or a giant chameleon?

kelvingreen

12-09-2008 04:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9701893)

Why do dwarves never ride things? It never made sense to me, and seems almost entirely based on the fact that Gimli didn't ride a horse

Perhaps because they're usually depicted as having disproportionately short legs; as such they're unable to get their legs around the torso of an animal to get a proper grip, and so don't bother. Although one would think that dwarves would just then come up with a different riding style.

Perhaps then it's to do with habitat. Perhaps riding beasts don't provide a useful advantage in terms of speed and versatility in an underground mining setting, and the dwarves' famous resilience means that they can walk or run for much longer and more comfortably than those races that use mounts for long-distance travel.

Sleeper

12-09-2008 05:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9705315)

Perhaps because they're usually depicted as having disproportionately short legs; as such they're unable to get their legs around the torso of an animal to get a proper grip, and so don't bother. Although one would think that dwarves would just then come up with a different riding style.

Perhaps then it's to do with habitat. Perhaps riding beasts don't provide a useful advantage in terms of speed and versatility in an underground mining setting, and the dwarves' famous resilience means that they can walk or run for much longer and more comfortably than those races that use mounts for long-distance travel.

Then they need a low-slung, stable animal that's comfortable in dark, dank, irregular environs and has a relatively small mid-section.

Beware the monstrous centipede riders!

JRM

12-09-2008 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9701131)

I'm pretty sure it's "litch", like in "lich gate", the gate to a graveyard. (It's the same word; "lich" is an old word for "corpse". The application to an undead being comes from Clark Ashton Smith, I think.)

Yes, we pronounce it "litch" over here in the UK. Incidentally, I believe in Ye Olde English lich originally meant "body", possibly a live one, and later came to exclusively refer to a dead body.

JRM

12-09-2008 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9702295)

In recent months, I've gotten the idea for the a game in which the PCs get a map to a fantastic lost valley of dinosaurs. When they get there, the dinosaurs are actually giant lizards and crocodiles with fins and horns stuck to them, ala the shitty dinosaur movies of old.

Problem is, I have no idea what do to with that idea beyond that point.

Obviously, they start hunting for the Lost Diamond Mines of Legend while fighting off the Infeasibly Pale-Skinned Amazons in Skimpy Bikinis and being helped by the Friendly Ape-Person they rescued from the "Dinosaurs".

JRM

12-09-2008 06:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9703995)

Sticky-footed subteranean lizards were eventually brought in as mounts for Drow.

Don't forget the pack-lizards! Drow and the other subterranean races have been using these animals to transport their goods since the days of *D1-D3 Descent into the Depths of the Earth*.

Wakboth

12-09-2008 06:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

And duergar have been shown riding giant spiders (called steeders), which is a bit odd to me.

Spiders would seem like a much more likely fit with the drow, while lizards would suit the duergar well.

Sleeper

12-09-2008 07:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9705500)

Yes, we pronounce it "litch" over here in the UK. Incidentally, I believe in Ye Olde English lich originally meant "body", possibly a live one, and later came to exclusively refer to a dead body.

My Websters desktop says "litch" but [Wiktionary](#) claims both the "like" and "litch" pronunciations are correct. Old English "lic" meant corpse (I don't know of any earlier, more general definitions), though my old unabridged Websters adds that it is used primarily in combination (the given example is "lich-house"). The corpse definition and the whole lychgate thing appear to be primarily British Englishisms. Wiktionary also claims it can be used poetically to refer to a living body, particularly a torso. Would be interesting to know what the OED says.

Wakshaani

12-09-2008 10:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9705523)

And duergar have been shown riding giant spiders (called steeders), which is a bit odd to me.

Spiders would seem like a much more likely fit with the drow, while lizards would suit the duergar well.

Absolutely agreed.

However, they didn't DO it that way.

Maybe spider-riding makes a Drow look too much like a Drider for their own comfort?

(See also: Silliness of Driders being outcasts.)

JRM

12-09-2008 11:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9705697)

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Well I only have a Concise Oxford within easy reach, but it says:

lich, lich, n. ~-gate, roofed gateway of churchyard where coffin awaits clergyman's arrival; **~-house**, mortuary; **~-owl**, **screech-owl** (boding death); **~-stone** (to place coffin on at lich-gate). [OE *lic* corpse, = OS *lic*, OHG *lih*, ON *lik*, Goth. *leik* f. Gmc *likam* body, form, appearance]

While Chambers 20th Century Dictionary says:

lich *lich* *n.* a body, living or dead (obs.). **-lich'gate**, **lych'gate** a roofed churchyard gate to rest the bier under; **lich'-owl** a screech-owl, deemed a death-portent; **lich'wake** see **lykewake**; **lich'waya** path by which the dead are carried to burial. [M.E. *lich*, *liche* (Southern), *like* (Northern) - O.E. *lic*; Ger. *Leiche*, corpse]

So it looks like the "body" meaning comes from its Germanic root, but the "corpse" meaning has been the main usage for quite some time.

noisms

12-09-2008 11:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lizard Man

Lizard Men are that rare thing in D&D: a Neutral humanoid enemy-style race. In fact I can't think of any others... except the Locathah maybe? (Coincidentally on the very next page.) This makes them more interesting, in that their malice or danger is entirely due to hunger and/or self-defence, rather than sheer aggression or meanness. They can therefore fulfil something more than the standard orc-substitute role.

I think one of the most common, and more interesting, Lizard Men concepts is the 'fallen civilisation' motif. Whether the Lizard Men are the remnants of an ancient empire now fallen to barbarism, or whether they are merely inhabiting the ruins of a now disappeared and superior people, they go together well with Mayan-style pyramids deep in jungle glades, moss-covered statues, and mysterious golden artifacts. The city of El Dorado would be inhabited by them, I think - perhaps with a slumbering Great Old One under the foundations.

Advanced Lizard Men

These are slightly more developed versions of the ordinary Lizard Men, as the name would suggest. Perhaps they remember more from the old times - or perhaps they have dug deeper beneath the ruins and made greater

discoveries. I like to imagine them armed with the occasional magical relic from the old times - a bronze heartseeker axe, or psionic jewelled necklace.

Lizard King

These are the leaders of the race, who generally boss around a tribe of underlings. They demand regular human sacrifice, and can easily be imagined sitting on a pyramid top a la *Apocalypso*, while a constant stream of human captives are decapitated and their heads thrown down the steep staircase. The only difference, of course, would be that the Lizard King would be eating the headless corpses.

JRM

12-09-2008 11:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9706185)
Absolutely agreed.

However, they didn't DO it that way.

Maybe spider-riding makes a Drow look too much like a Drider for their own comfort?

(See also: Silliness of Driders being outcasts.)

Aren't there spider-riding drow in some later sources?

As for the drider-drow outcast silliness, one possible explanation is that it originated in some sort of lese majesty heresy? Perhaps the original driders were drow wizard-priests who broke with the mainstream Lolth worship and tried to become closer to the goddess by self-transformation, so the fully elf-shaped drow priestesses declared them Abomination and Lolth decided to play along, maybe after the obligatory civil war, so it now became a punishment to unworthy drow, since only the Spider-Goddess and her supernatural handmaidens are "pure" enough to blend the sacred forms of dark elf and spider without stain on their character.

JRM

12-10-2008 12:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)

Lizard Man

Lizard Men are that rare thing in D&D: a Neutral humanoid enemy-style race. In fact I can't think of any others... except the Locathah maybe? (Coincidentally on the very next page.) This makes them more interesting, in that their malice or danger is entirely due to hunger and/or self-defence, rather than sheer aggression or meanness. They can therefore fulfil something more than the standard orc-substitute role.

Crabmen and Mongrelmen are probably next on my list of AD&D's "are they friends or enemies", but Lizardmen are my favourite. There are a few other candidates among the Monstrous Compendium's Neutral aligned monsters, such as Centaurs (which are regrettably unlikely to eat captured PCs) and Quaggoths (which in my opinion are too vicious to offer much potential as PC allies). Oh, and there are Thri-Kreen as well.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)

I think one of the most common, and more interesting, Lizard Men concepts is the 'fallen civilisation' motif. Whether the Lizard Men are the remnants of an ancient empire now fallen to barbarism, or whether they are merely inhabiting the ruins of a now disappeared and superior people, they go together well with Mayan-style pyramids deep in jungle glades, moss-covered statues, and mysterious golden artifacts. The city of El Dorado would be inhabited by them, I think - perhaps with a slumbering Great Old One under the foundations.

snip

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There's evidence that at least some of the ancient Meso- and South American civilizations that indulged in human sacrifice also practices cannibalism at least on occasion, so that distinction may not hold water.

As for the lost civilization, why not have lizard men who still have a civilization, or even better, are in the process of (re)building one and want the PCs assistance. That would likely tie in well with the "Lost World of Dinosaurs" campaign idea that's been floating around here. Maybe they're trying to rebuild their sacred ziggurat so they can get back in touch with Yig and/or the Coatls?

noisms

12-10-2008 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9706532)

Crabmen and Mongrelmen are probably next on my list of AD&D's "are they friends or enemies", but Lizardmen are my favourite.

Oh yeah, Crabmen. I think Mongrelmen are Lawful Neutral though, aren't they? I should have specified True Neutral.

Sleeper

12-10-2008 12:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9706372)

Well I only have a Concise Oxford within easy reach, but it says:

lich, lich, n. **~-gate**, roofed gateway of churchyard where coffin awaits clergyman's arrival; **~-house**, mortuary; **~-owl**, **screech-owl** (boding death); **~-stone** (to place coffin on at lich-gate). [OE *lic* corpse, = OS *lic*, OHG *lih*, ON *lik*, Goth. *leik* f. Gmc *likam* body, form, appearance]

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So it looks like the "body" meaning comes from its Germanic root, but the "corpse" meaning has been the main usage for quite some time.

Aha. Webster's Collegiate says: **lich** (*lich***) n. [[ME < OE *lic*, akin to Ger *leiche*, corpse < IE base **lig-*, figure, shape, similar, like > LIKE2]] [Now Brit. Dial.] a dead body; corpse.

** with the lower end of the c extending into the h, whatever that's called

My (much older) Unabridged copy is formatted differently but otherwise similar, except the the note that the word is usually used in combination. Note the absence of "body" among the list of synonyms for **lig-*.

Sleeper

12-10-2008 12:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)

Lizard King

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The image of the lizard king that will be forever impressed on my mind comes from the original *Fiend Folio*. A nasty vaguely black lagoonish lizardman with a trident, futilely skewering squat squarish humanoids with baby-faced Alfred E. Neuman heads. This appeared to be simply because "lava children" and "lizard king" were alphabetically adjacent, rather than due to any natural animosity or in fact any reason at all why the two races would normally come into conflict.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)

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Yuppers! Along with Bullywugs, Aarocka, and Kuo-Toa, these are the four known "Elder Races" that predate not only Man, but Elves and Dwarves as well. Some say that they predate *Dragonkind* as well, or, at the least, that Dragons, LizardMen, and Kobolds all have some kind of relationship. There *should* be a fifth, mammalian race, but none ever stepped up to the plate as such. (I'm given to understand that there's a race of Ocelot-Men in Maztica, but, I'm sketchy on teh details.)

In this way, Advanced and Kings might be less-regressed types, or those who've discovered some tiny shreds of their Lost Great Empire. Bullywugs are the way to go for swamps, Kua-Toa underground or undersea, Aarocka for mountain peaks or cloud cities, while Bullywugs and Lizardfolk split the difference in the jungles. Lizardfolk, however, make **fantastic** Lost Civilization types in desert settings, to the degree that, if you haven't run Lizardfolk Mummies, you're seriously missing out.

For a more tame adventure seed, have the party encounter what the map said was a stream but turns out to be a small river. They need to make time, but, luckily, a tribe of advanced lizardfolk is nearby. They need to negotiate (gasp!) for a guide and a barge to reach Point X, but, the lizardfolk don't trust humans/Dwarves/etc due to being preyed upon by a local village's forces. Make peace, then make haste to the adventure, proper!

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9706723)

The image of the lizard king that will be forever impressed on my mind comes from the original Fiend Folio.

For me, predictably, it's the *Fighting Fantasy* Lizard King, a brutish thug uplifted to leadership by the alien parasite that lives on/in his head.

Wakboth

12-10-2008 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)

I think one of the most common, and more interesting, Lizard Men concepts is the 'fallen civilisation' motif. Whether the Lizard Men are the remnants of an ancient empire now fallen to barbarism, or whether they are merely inhabiting the ruins of a now disappeared and superior people, they go together well with Mayan-style pyramids deep in jungle glades, moss-covered statues, and mysterious golden artifacts. The city of El Dorado would be inhabited by them, I think - perhaps with a slumbering Great Old One under the foundations.

Funnily enough, I always used lizard men as a race that was just starting to get the hang of this "civilization" stuff - tool use, building mud huts, forming tribes and such. Yuan-ti fitted the role of "regressed survivors of ancient reptilian empire" better, I thought.

Quote:

Lizard King

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Nice image, that. Of course, Lizard Kings (like flinds and orogs and whatnot) are monsters that exist only because of AD&D's oddities; namely, that you couldn't give classes and levels to the humanoids and boost them that way.

Vultur10

12-10-2008 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've actually been working up a lizard-man civilization on the Wizards D&D boards, in the dinosaur thread. I have them building towns and cities in the areas where the dinosaurs and such are rare enough that towns won't attract too much predatory attention, and being nomads elsewhere.

The Last Conformist

12-10-2008 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9706377)
Lizard King

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While it should perhaps go without saying that creatures demanding regular human sacrifice are chaotic evil, it's stills noteworthy that True Neutral Lizard Men have Chaotic Evil Lizard Kings. Shouldn't there, like, be a lot of ethically-inspired republicanism around in Lizard Man circles?

Also, why specifically *human* sacrifice? We're told demihumans or other humanoids will do in a pinch, even fellow Lizard Men if nothing else is available, but not why humans are preferred in the first place.

Wakboth

12-10-2008 04:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9707620)
Also, why specifically human sacrifice? We're told demihumans or other humanoids will do in a pinch, even fellow Lizard Men if nothing else is available, but not why humans are preferred in the first place.

Because in the old pulp stories, ~~serpent men~~ lizardmen would sacrifice humans to their evil god. :)

Wakshaani

12-10-2008 05:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9707802)

Because in the old pulp stories, ~~serpent men~~ lizardmen would sacrifice humans to their evil god. :)

Plus, THIS way you get captive blonde-haired princesses, tied to twin posts and left for their Evil Reptile God to wade through the woods, find, and eat her... she gets to writhe and scream in terror beforehand, giving teh heroes plenty of motivation, and time, to get over there and save her.

When it's a slope-browed lizard there, hissing and tongue-flicking ... not so much.

See also [Here](#).

The Last Conformist

12-10-2008 06:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9707919)

Plus, THIS way you get captive blonde-haired princesses, tied to twin posts and left for their Evil Reptile God to wade through the woods, find, and eat her... she gets to writhe and scream in terror beforehand, giving teh heroes plenty of motivation, and time, to get over there and save her.

When it's a slope-browed lizard there, hissing and tongue-flicking ... not so much.

See also [Here](#).

Doesn't really explain why an elven chick wouldn't work.

DMH

12-10-2008 07:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lizardmen could be used as swamp dwelling gillmen. They can stay under in waist deep water and chew on the PCs. Why else would they bite? You don't see a bite attack under orc or kobold.

s/LaSH

12-10-2008 07:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9708226)

Doesn't really explain why an elven chick wouldn't work.

For some people, it would work *better*.

Except elves tend to hang out in temperate forest, not rainforest ripe with the scent of decay, for some reason. Perhaps only humans ever had the idea of walking south for a while.

Kakita Kojiro

12-10-2008 08:32 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9707919)

When it's a slope-browed lizard there, hissing and tongue-flicking ... not so much.

You know, I am *totally* going to have to have it be a dragonborn woman tied up, waiting to be sacrificed, in my 4e game. Too funny, having those heaving bosoms be scaly... with the slope-browed, hissing and tongue-flicking damsel in distress. Perfect rug to yank out from under the players, really.

... I suppose I should have her being sacrifice to some horrible, *warm-blooded*, alien deity, just to complete the trope-reversal. Maybe a giant keetoom?

Wakshaani

12-10-2008 11:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well, I've had 'em deal with sacrificial medusae and harpies before, so, hey.

Ragnarok_Engine

12-10-2008 01:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9708740)

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... I suppose I should have her being sacrifice to some horrible, warm-blooded, alien deity, just to complete the trope reversal. Moybe o giant keetoom?

An Ape Gargantua, of course! Duh! ;)

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9706817)

*Yuppers! Along with Bullywugs, Aarocka, and Kuo-Toa, these are the four known "Elder Races" that predate not only Man, but Elves and Dwarves as well. Some say that they predate *Dragonkind* as well, or, at the least, that Dragon: LizardMen, and Kobolds all have some kind of relationship. There *should* be a fifth, mammalian race, but none ever stepped up to the plate as such. (I'm given to understand that there's a race of Ocelot-Men in Maztica, but, I'm sketchy on teh details.)*

*In this way, Advanced and Kings might be less-regressed types, or those who've discovered some tiny shreds of their Lost Great Empire. Bullywugs are the way to go for swamps, Kuo-Toa underground or undersea, Aarocka for mountain peaks or cloud cities, while Bullywugs and Lizardfolk split the difference in the jungles. Lizardfolk, however, make *fantastic* Lost Civilization types in desert settings, to the degree that, if you haven't run Lizardfolk Mummies, you're seriously missing out.*

For a more tame adventure seed, have the party encounter what the map said was a stream but turns out to be a small river. They need to make time, but, luckily, a tribe of advanced lizardfolk is nearby. They need to negotiate (gasp!) for a guide and a barge to reach Point X, but, the lizardfolk don't trust humans/Dwarves/etc due to being preyed upon by a local village's forces. Make peace, then make haste to the adventure, proper!

That reminds me, Lizard Men are one of AD&D's few tribal humanoid monsters with total sexual equality - indeed they're so equal that it's very hard to tell the genders apart, and their patron deity is a hermaphrodite! Most of the other humanoids that are likely to kill and eat adventurers have their males stronger than females - e.g. goblins, bugbears etc.

Yet, lizardmen are one of the few AD&D monsters with Man in their name. It'd make more sense to call the 1st/2nd AD&D versions "lizardfolk" like they are in 3rd edition, since the PCs are likely to be fighting specimens of both sexes at the same time.

Sleeper

12-10-2008 09:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9710607)

That reminds me, Lizard Men are one of AD&D's few tribal humanoid monsters with total sexual equality - indeed they're so equal that it's very hard to tell the genders apart, and their patron deity is a hermaphrodite! Most of the other humanoids that are likely to kill and eat adventurers have their males stronger than females - e.g. goblins, bugbears etc.

Yet, lizardmen are one of the few AD&D monsters with Man in their name. It'd make more sense to call the 1st/2nd AD&D versions "lizardfolk" like they are in 3rd edition, since the PCs are likely to be fighting specimens of both sexes at the same time.

The "-man" is simple mammalian prejudice. Milk-producing breasts are a feature of the furry females, not the

scaly ones. No boobs. Plus, they lay eggs so say bye-bye to the wider hips. Of course humans and all the semi- and demi- types just can't tell the two sexes apart.

Instead, the warmbloods have to go by cultural cues. Once or twice a year, half the lizards dress up. The homeotherms just assume all the elaborate dances and frills and pretty colored crests are girly things, but the fork-tongues fool them. It's actually the males playing little rooster and doing their best to attract the more sedately colored and apparently masculinely stoic females. There might even be some visible secondary characteristics. Blood swells the crests on the male heads, which frill out and blossom into Carmen Miranda-style headdresses in all kinds of bright colors. Peacockskulls.

Pat

Wakboth

12-10-2008 09:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9707919)

Plus, THIS way you get captive blonde-haired princesses, tied to twin posts and left for their Evil Reptile God to wade through the woods, find, and eat her... she gets to writhe and scream in terror beforehand, giving teh heroes plenty of motivation, and time, to get over there and save her.

When it's a slope-browed lizard there, hissing and tongue-flicking ... not so much.

See also Here.

I was totally thinking about [this](#). (Darn, I remembered the girl as a blonde, there...)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM

Most of the other humanoids that are likely to kill and eat adventurers have their males stronger than females - e.g. goblins, bugbears etc.

Although MM talks about gnolls having a male-dominant society, just about everyone I know who has used them, has also given them a hyena-styled matriarchy. :)

Wakshaani

12-10-2008 11:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9710780)

I was totally thinking about this. (Darn, I remembered the girl as a blonde, there...)

Mayhap you were thinking of [this](#)?

As for Gnolls, I'm way too late for THAT thread (alas), but I usually see them as A) man-eaters, B) terrifying mercenaries due to A (They're, literally, inhuman), and C) Muslim. Not sure why that last one, but, I've seen no less than five campaigns with muslim-styled Gnolls, dating back over fifteen years.

Weird.

DMH

12-11-2008 04:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I wonder why lizardmen have a bite attack and gnolls don't? With the ofte quote about hyenas being able to shatter bone easily, I would think someone would have added a bite attack.

Is there any other humanoids that have a bite attack?

JRM

12-11-2008 04:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9710739)

The "-man" is simple mammalian prejudice. Milk-producing breasts are a feature of the furry females, not the scaly ones. No boobs. Plus, they lay eggs so say bye-bye to the wider hips. Of course humans and all the semi- and demi-types just can't tell the two sexes apart.

Hmm... Lizard Men are as intelligent as humans, ergo that probably have large brains even as infants, which implies a large egg and "egg-laying hips", although that it contrary to AD&D canon, so possibly lizardmen babies are born really dumb and get smarter later.

Now we just need to explain dragonborn boobs.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9710739)

Instead, the warmbloods have to go by cultural cues. Once or twice a year, half the lizards dress up. The homeotherms just assume all the elaborate dances and frills and pretty colored crests are girly things, but the fork-tongues fool them. It's actually the males playing little rooster and doing their best to attract the more sedately colored and apparently masculinely stoic females. There might even be some visible secondary characteristics. Blooa swells the crests on the male heads, which frill out and blossom into Carmen Miranda-style headdresses in all kinds of bright colors. Peacockskulls.

Pat

I've got a species of reptile-hominids where the males are small, colourful show-offs in my homebrew campaign, but that doesn't match the standard AD&D Lizard Man where both sexes appear identical. Maybe AD&D lizard people culture doesn't distinguish between the sexes, they just bump uglies at random and find out who's females by which of them lay eggs afterwards? Of course, that would play havoc with sexual selection - which, come to think of it, could explain why they look identical - there is no gender-difference in mate selection!

Maybe male or female lizard men become more attractive/socially dominant to other lizard people by the same means (success in battle, quantity of food, a really nice tail or whatever), so the "alpha" lizard has a circle of mates all of who he/she mates with, and the whole tribe shares egg-watching and hatchling-raising duties. The Lizard King could be a mutant or "queen bee" form that has shortcut these signals to dominate an entire tribe.

JRM

12-11-2008 04:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9712571)

I wonder why lizardmen have a bite attack and gnolls don't? With the oft quote about hyenas being able to shatter bone easily, I would think someone would have added a bite attack.

Is there any other humanoids that have a bite attack?

Yes, norkers are the first that spring to mind.

Littleredfox

12-11-2008 05:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9712623)

Hmm... Lizard Men are as intelligent as humans, ergo that probably have large brains even as infants, which implies a large egg and "egg-laying hips", although that is contrary to AD&D canon, so possibly lizardmen babies are born really dumb and get smarter later.

Spelljammer tells us that lizardman intelligence is higher the nearer to the sun they are while in the egg. [Apparently some bright lizardman noticed that he and all the other bright lizardmen came from the inner planets and thick lizardmen come from the outer ones.]

So they build incubation ships to hang in close orbit around stars to give their progeny a better start in life.

Inyssi

12-11-2008 05:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9712623)

Hmm... Lizard Men are as intelligent as humans, ergo that probably have large brains even as infants, which implies a large egg and "egg-laying hips", although that is contrary to AD&D canon, so possibly lizardmen babies are born really dumb and get smarter later.

Now we just need to explain dragonborn boobs.

Lizards lay eggs, and do not suckle their young.

Lizardmen are lizards, and dragonborn are dragons. But dragons are not lizards, and lizards are not dragons.

Dragons could just as well be egg-laying mammals, like the platypus or echinida--but I think a very good case could be made that they occupy their own taxonomic class.

s/LaSH

12-11-2008 06:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssi (Post 9712928)

Dragons could just as well be egg-laying mammals, like the platypus or echinida--but I think a very good case could be made that they occupy their own taxonomic class.

They're hexapods. They probably count as vertebrates, but in our world's phylogenetic tree, they'd have branched off somewhere before fish. The lamprey would be the closest relation between us (and the lizard, and other closely-related species) and the dragon. So, considering that lizards and people are thus practically identical compared to that gulf of separation, you can really justify anything over on the draconic side of the tree.

(This does have a slight problem, however. Where are the third pair of limbs on the Dragonborn?)

Sleeper

12-11-2008 07:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by s/LaSH (Post 9713089)

They're hexapods. They probably count as vertebrates, but in our world's phylogenetic tree, they'd have branched off somewhere before fish. The lamprey would be the closest relation between us (and the lizard, and other closely-related species) and the dragon. So, considering that lizards and people are thus practically identical compared to that gulf of separation, you can really justify anything over on the draconic side of the tree.

Now use that logic to explain owlbears (bird/mammal crossbreeds). Or coatl (bird/serpent crossbreeds). Or an

ettercap (mammal/insect crossbreed). Dragons are reptiles. The extra set of limbs is just... magic homoplasy. Though in one of the D&D mythology riff threads, I explained it away [by claiming dragons are actually arthropods...](#)

Inyssius

12-11-2008 08:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ettercaps are technically mammals--halfings twisted and tortured and reshaped until they resemble insects; god knows how that cycle started, but it didn't come about the way you're assuming. Coatls are descended from dinosaurs, like our feathered birds--but being Outsiders, they don't necessarily need to have come into being via evolution. I'd suspect a hefty infusion of celestial blood, either from actual intercourse or simply mythological leakage from long residence in the forests of Celestia.

Owlbears are harder to figure out. Could totemism actually be a valid evolutionary strategy in D&D worlds--owls are mythologically linked with awareness, ferocity, destruction, ill fortune and death, after all. Could a bearlike species have developed a more owl-like appearance over time in order to tap into that link? It might go some way toward explaining the profusion of humanoid animals, too...

randomgamer8466

12-11-2008 08:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Recently in 4e, my Eladrin rogue/warlock and his human fighter friend got clues that Drow were around. As an Elf (sorta), my character was dead set on mass drowbicide, but the human fighter was less convinced. Then we encountered some Ettercaps. The way my DM described them, they were brain-damaged humans with mechanical spider limbs and spinnerets (no spider allies). After we killed them, I explained to my human ally that these were called Ettercaps and that name was Drowish for "improved human". He found his motivation after that.

Also: What, all this discussion of Lizard Kings and no Jim Morrison jokes?

Wakboth

12-11-2008 12:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by s/LaSH (Post 9713089)
(This does have a slight problem, however. Where are the third pair of limbs on the Dragonborn?)

Well, DBs aren't dragons, either. Just related to them.

Sleeper

12-11-2008 01:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9713479)

Ettercaps are technically mammals--halflings twisted and tortured and reshaped until they resemble insects; god knows how that cycle started, but it didn't come about the way you're assuming.

That's exactly what I'm assuming. Using pseudo-science gobblegook and horribly convoluted and contrived explanations can certainly be fun, but to pick on one of the abominations from the third edition: Are grell giant brains with tentacles and a beak, or are they just an animal that happens to look kind of like a brain, with tentacles and a beak? Sure you can ask which is more logical. But the better question might be: Which is cooler? Sure, the pegasus myth may (or may not) have started when some random shepherd saw an eagle landing on or just silhouetted behind an equine. But riding to the top of mount Olympus on a snowy-white steed to challenge the gods is far more interesting than an isolated fluke of perception. Claiming the winged horse is actually related to fish and dragons because it's a hexapod certainly can make a fun, offbeat setting. But for the default, I'd prefer to keep the irrational amalgam of faithful horse and fierce raptor. Magic is about correspondence and dream logic. It follows the laws authors use when they weave layers of depth and meaning into a narrative. And combining two powerful symbols, even if the result is a phylogenetic monstrosity, still resonates.

But then again, if grouchy old lizards and wizards with big-brimmed hats get blasé, then making dragons the second cousin to lampreys can be a cool twist. Slick black slimey and mostly mindless. Drifting through the skies until they find a gargantuan host, like a roc or a dragon trutle. Dozens might dangle from the side of the megashark of the land, the tarrasque, tails and atrophied limbs flailing around as it rampages.

Pat

HaplessVictim

12-11-2008 01:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9712623)

I've got a species of reptile-hominids where the males are small, colourful show-offs in my homebrew campaign, but that doesn't match the standard AD&D Lizard Man where both sexes appear identical. Maybe AD&D lizard people culture doesn't distinguish between the sexes, they just bump uglies at random and find out who's females by which of them lay eggs afterwards?

Or perhaps, like some amphibian species, lizardmen are hermaphrodites, and change sex depending on environmental and social circumstances.

ObAdventureSeed: The local lizardmen tribe, which for generations has been peaceful if aloof, has suddenly started attacking local towns with extraordinary viciousness. Upon investigation, it turns out that by damming a river for their mill, the townsfolk have stressed the lizardmen habitat, causing many more lizardmen to become male than female. This sex imbalance has awakened the lizardmen urge to expand territory, resulting in the clash.

YojimboC

12-11-2008 02:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Littleredfox (Post 9712777)

Spelljammer tells us that lizardman intelligence is higher the nearer to the sun they are while in the egg. [Apparently some bright lizardman noticed that he and all the other bright lizardmen came from the inner planets and thick lizardmen come from the outer ones.]

So they build incubation ships to hang in close orbit around stars to give their progeny a better start in life.

Holy shit, I forgot entirely about that. Lizard Men were a playable race in Spelljammer. Which is cool, because they come from Flash Gordon anyway, so it makes sense to have lizard people in space.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9713291)

Now use that logic to explain owlbears (bird/mammal crossbreeds).

I thought a wizard did it. Wasn't it a wizard?

The Butcher

12-11-2008 02:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9714630)

I thought a wizard did it. Wasn't it a wizard?

In my campaigns, animal hybrids such as owlbears, chimeras, griffons, hippogriffs, minotaurs and other hybrids are generally assumed to be the result of ancient experiments, from a long fallen empire of unethical sorcerers.

Just for the possibility of sending PCs back in time to fight an ancient sorcerous empire which fielded armored owlbears as shock troops.

Belchion

12-11-2008 03:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9714630)

I thought a wizard did it. Wasn't it a wizard?

I think weird animal mixtures like those smell like druid - I mean, who else would want a strange monster consisting of natural animals to keep intruders out their wood? Wizard can just conjure a demon and be done with it.

sim_james

12-11-2008 08:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Butcher (Post 9714695)

Just for the possibility of sending PCs back in time to fight an ancient sorcerous empire which fielded armored owlbears as shock troops.

...

Owlbears just got a lot more cool.

Dammit, I would have been interested in Eberron if it had this.

Sleeper

12-11-2008 08:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9714788)

I think weird animal mixtures like those smell like druid - I mean, who else would want a strange monster consisting of natural animals to keep intruders out their wood? Wizard can just conjure a demon and be done with it.

I think the ecoterrorist tree-hugging variety of druid that has become the ahistorical but de facto standard would disapprove of animal experimentation. Whereas wizards are the default meddlers with nature.

Then again, I never thought druids and modern environmentalism and animal cruelty advocacy were a good mix. I prefer red in tooth and claw. There is a certain pragmatic appeal in making horrible monsters to shred the soldiers of your culture's faux-Roman conquerors.

Wakshaani

12-11-2008 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9713532)

Also: What, all this discussion of Lizard Kings and no Jim Morrison jokes?

ho the heck is Jim Morrison? Wasn't he teh Kool-Aid massacre guy?

Wakboth

12-11-2008 10:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9715331)

I think the ecoterrorist tree-hugging variety of druid that has become the ahistorical but de facto standard would disapprove of animal experimentation. Whereas wizards are the default meddlers with nature.

In 3e, where druids could be any flavor of neutral, I'm sure there would be plenty of CN or NE druids happy to breed owlbears ("Cause... you know, a bear with an owl's head! And big claws! So cool!" vs. "Okay, time to stamp out those pesky farmers. Hmm... what sort of unstable DNA do I have around?").

Wakboth

12-11-2008 10:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9715550)

ho the heck is Jim Morrison? Wasn't he teh Kool-Aid massacre guy?

:eek:

...

..

.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_morrison

Squizzle

12-11-2008 10:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9715550)

ho the heck is Jim Morrison? Wasn't he teh Kool-Aid massacre guy?

Be very glad that I can't kill you with my mind.

The Last Conformist

12-11-2008 11:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Dragon wings aren't actually limbs, *sensu stricto*, but exapted gills*. Their ancestry isn't from reptiles, but from scaly, amphibious basal tetrapods, perhaps temnospondyls.

* In reality, this is the probably origin of insect wings.

randomgamer8466

12-12-2008 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9715550)
ho the heck is Jim Morrison? Wasn't he teh Kool-Aid massacre guy?

He was the Lizard King. He could do anything.

Except say "no" to a double handful of pills and a fifth of bourbon.

Sleeper

12-12-2008 01:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9716510)
He was the Lizard King. He could do anything.

Except say "no" to a double handful of pills and a fifth of bourbon.

Or write good poetry.

Sleeper

12-12-2008 02:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9715331)

Then again, I never thought druids and modern environmentalism and animal cruelty advocacy were a good mix. I prefer red in tooth and claw. There is a certain pragmatic appeal in making horrible monsters to shred the soldiers of your culture's faux-Roman conquerors.

Just to expand on it a bit.

The flames of their fires turn the faces of the legionnaires a ghastly red as they laugh and trade war stories, grope camp followers, and slurp down beans ladled from an iron pot. A scrambling and a querulous hooting is heard from the western side of the encampment, where they spent several hours in the late afternoon digging a shallow ditch and lining it with sharpened tree trunks, pointing out. Bursting through the barrier with a whistling, pained roar is a giant ursine form, with enormous glowing eyes and a hideously sharp beak. It quickly dies under a hail of javelins, but almost twenty soldiers are rent asunder before the sergeants can shout some order out of chaos.

A soldier seeks the privacy of the latrine pit, ignoring the dangling strands. As he conducts his business, there is a huge rustling under the leaves, as the seemingly-solid ground he's standing on suddenly rises into the overhanging trees. His scream is aborted by the piercing mandibles of a strangely spider-eyed humanoid. Five scuttering minutes later, the leaves are scattered again over the newly patched net. The ettercap clammers into the branches, hangs the dead man next to three similar swaying bundles wrapped in gossamer, and waits for the next centurion to heed the call of nature.

These composite monsters aren't ancient magical experiments gone wrong. They're new. Wild stories spread about the latest horrible massacre, and rumors spread about the monsters behind them. These monsters are deliberately forged weapons in a guerilla war against the occupying troops. The empire may hold the cities and the roads, but the farmlands and forest between them have become a fearsome nest of morale-breaking lurking monstrosities.

Kakita Kojiro

12-12-2008 02:12 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Butcher (Post 9714695)

Just for the possibility of sending PCs back in time to fight an ancient sorcerous empire which fielded armored owlbeats as shock troops.

Panseruglebjørner!

My players would kill me. *ponders*

Belchion

12-12-2008 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9715331)

I think the ecoterrorist tree-hugging variety of druid that has become the ahistorical but de facto standard would disapprove of animal experimentation.

See, the AD&D druid is True Neutral - that means when good becomes too strong, he supports evil, if law becomes too strong, he supports chaos.

So, imagine a lawful good empire controls most parts of the world. Or, if you prefer, a lawful good treaty keeps law and good up on a continent full of several realms. Now, the druids have to react somehow. Simply sending existing monsters won't do any good - they are well studied, their weaknesses known and thus they prove no challenge to the defenders of the status quo. Still, the True Neutral druid has to balance things - wouldn't mutating otherwise "harmless" animals into grotesque monsters seem to be the way to achieve this goal for at least some druids, thinking of their "nature is superior" agenda? Especially when considering that the mutations definitely will make people doubt in order?

Thus, I could imagine this behaviour for standard druids under certain circumstances. I could definitely imagine it for some delusional druidic cult.

demiurge1138

12-12-2008 09:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9714630)

I thought a wizard did it. Wasn't it a wizard?

According to the Age of Worms AP, the wizard Thesselar, now a lich, took credit for the creation of owlbears, among other composite monsters. If you remember thessalhydras, he's the guy who made 'em.

And, of course, since you meet him while playing high level D&D, it is fully expected in the module that you kill him (or at least seriously inconvenience him) and take his stuff.

J Harper

12-12-2008 09:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9715331)

Then again, I never thought druids and modern environmentalism and animal cruelty advocacy were a good mix. I prefer red in tooth and claw. There is a certain pragmatic appeal in making horrible monsters to shred the soldiers of your culture's faux-Roman conquerors.

[The Wedding of Sheila-Na-Gog](#)

Cheers.

Jeremy Harper

YojimboC

12-12-2008 10:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9718514)

According to the Age of Worms AP, the wizard Thesselar, now a lich, took credit for the creation of owlbears, among other composite monsters. If you remember thessalhydras, he's the guy who made 'em.

And, of course, since you meet him while playing high level D&D, it is fully expected in the module that you kill him (or at least seriously inconvenience him) and take his stuff.

I knew it!

Vultur10

12-12-2008 11:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Would people be interested in my doing this same sort of thread for the Ravenloft MC appendixes?

Sleeper

12-12-2008 11:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9717473)

See, the AD&D druid is True Neutral - that means when good becomes too strong, he supports evil, if law becomes too strong, he supports chaos.

So, imagine a lawful good empire controls most parts of the world. Or, if you prefer, a lawful good treaty keeps law and good up on a continent full of several realms. Now, the druids have to react somehow. Simply sending existing monsters won't do any good - they are well studied, their weaknesses known and thus they prove no challenge to the defenders of the status quo. Still, the True Neutral druid has to balance things - wouldn't mutating otherwise "harmless" animals into grotesque monsters seem to be the way to achieve this goal for at least some druids, thinking of their "nature is superior" agenda? Especially when considering that the mutations definitely will make people doubt in order?

Thus, I could imagine this behaviour for standard druids under certain circumstances. I could definitely imagine it for some delusional druidic cult.

I think Gyax was channelling Lovecraft and contemplating the beauty of non-Euclidean geometries (wait, isn't

everything non-Euclidean these days?) when he crafted True Neutral, and alignment languages. Maybe he caught the infection from Moorcock. Or maybe his brain was temporarily swapped out by Greys. Because it makes *no sense*. It's not how people think, or behave. The thought processes required to adhere to such precepts are inhuman, *alien*.

Fighting for self, for family. Maybe for friends. That's how humans roll. For personal habit, or collective habits ingrained in customs, cultures and mores. Sure. It saves thinking and gives us that warm feeling that even if we're wrong we were just doing what we were told. Or because someone talked pretty, or loudly, or angrily. After all, we're pack animals. Go alpha go. Stepping further back on Maslow's hierarchy, even an intellectual and non-visceral commitment to saving the world, however you define "world" and what it needs to be saved from, is vanishingly rare but at least it's happened. Once or twice. We think.

But randomly going ape because there isn't enough of one abstract ideal or the other that we've codified and deconstructed until they fit into a nice symmetric disc around which everything revolves? It's like Discordianism, except without that wild let's-destroy-everything nihilistic fishmalk appeal that fascinates its three ardent followers and legions of hah-ha just kidding fans. Balance doesn't work, not for humans. Entropy is a thermodynamic concept, not a philosophy. It doesn't make sense, not that that's actually important. Reason is just a tiny glimmer in the wilderness of human irrationality. But regardless or irregardless or whichever rule or habit you prefer, True Neutral just isn't sexy. That's what's really important.

Now, chucking it all to concoct a fearsome, bloody, horrific revenge against a conquering enemy that will leave stains even Lady MacBeth can't get out with a wirebrush? That we can buy. Sex and blood, fire and passion. Kill them all. Chanting around the moon-drained monoliths, a dirge to lost sons and abused daughters. That I can buy. That's human.

see

12-12-2008 05:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9705697)

My Websters desktop says "litch" but Wiktionary claims both the "like" and "litch" pronunciations are correct. Old English "lic" meant corpse (I don't know of any earlier, more general definitions), though my old unabridged Webster adds that it is used primarily in combination (the given example is "lich-house"). The corpse definition and the whole lychgate thing appear to be primarily British Englishisms. Wiktionary also claims it can be used poetically to refer to a living body, particularly a torso. Would be interesting to know what the OED says.

OED gives the pronunciation as "litʃ", which would rhyme with ditch.

For etymology:

[OE. *lic* str. neut. = OFris. *lîk*, OS. *líc* (LG. *liche*, *like*, Du. *lijk*), OHG. *lîh* neut. and fem. (MHG. *lîch* fem., also weak *lîche*, G. *leiche* dead body), ON. *lik* (Sw. *lik*, Da. *lig*), Goth. *leik*:—OTeut. **lîkom* neut. Comparison with the cognate words (see *liche*, *like* a., *like* v.) suggests that the original sense was prob. 'form, shape'. The OE. *lic* became by normal development *lich*(e in the south and *like* in the north; hence the diversity of forms above. Cf. *ditch*, *dike*.)]

(un)reason

12-12-2008 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9718977)

Would people be interested in my doing this same sort of thread for the Ravenloft MC appendixes?

Go for it. There will be a few monsters that overlap, but hey, different opinions, different writing styles, entirely surmountable problem.

see

12-12-2008 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9710607)

Yet, lizardmen are one of the few AD&D monsters with Man in their name. It'd make more sense to call the 1st/2nd AD&D versions "lizardfolk" like they are in 3rd edition, since the PCs are likely to be fighting specimens of both sexes at the same time.

Well, in Old English, "man" was entirely sexless; the form that indicates members of the male gender is an innovation. Combined forms should be understood to retain the original sense. So, they're all firemen, mailmen, policemen, chairmen, mermen, mongrelmen, and lizardmen, whatever their reproductive equipment.

Male men were "wermen", female men were "wifmen"; the female form of the word evolved into "woman". Of course, in these degenerate centuries, there aren't any male men left, so no wonder we don't have a word for them anymore :)

JRM

12-12-2008 06:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Jeepers! I should have guessed a throwaway remark about dragonborn boobs would have spun off into three pages of evolutionary theory.

I've mentioned this before, but my take is that magic means that in AD&D Lamarkian evolution works. Will shapes the flesh. A grazer that stretches its neck to reach leaves has kids with a longer neck and in due course they're a giraffe-analogue. Sapient creatures are better at this, which explains why a lot of monster species are intelligent. Furthermore, this effect doesn't only apply to your *own* kids. If the whole tribe is afraid of a non-existent night-boojum, their collective will might mutate a strain of rats into becoming said night-boojum. Crazy wizards are just good enough to do this by themselves.

Also, AD&D magic obviously allows a animal's young to acquire just the right DNA to acquire the traits of another species and still remain viable. So a horse could acquire the wings of an eagle, plus a bit of a magic boost so it could actually fly. Now this may happen in nature (like real-life bacteria can swap DNA to acquire other strain's traits), but is probably mostly due to the meddling of archmages and gods.

As for dragons, well *obviously* they're remnants of the million years dead Dinosaur Civilization, boosted by so much magical life-engineering that their original species(es) is impossible to discern.:D

JRM

12-12-2008 06:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 9714438)

Or perhaps, like some amphibian species, lizardmen are hermaphrodites, and change sex depending on environmental and social circumstances.

ObAdventureSeed: The local lizardmen tribe, which for generations has been peaceful if aloof, has suddenly started attacking local towns with extraordinary viciousness. Upon investigation, it turns out that by damming a river for their mill, the townsfolk have stressed the lizardmen habitat, causing many more lizardmen to become male than female. This sex imbalance has awakened the lizardmen urge to expand territory, resulting in the clash.

Now why didn't I think of that. Sex-switching lizardmen is a great idea.

JRM

12-12-2008 06:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9719932)

Well, in Old English, "man" was entirely sexless; the form that indicates members of the male gender is an innovation. Combined forms should be understood to retain the original sense. So, they're all firemen, mailmen, policemen, chairmen, mermen, mongrelmen, and lizardmen, whatever their reproductive equipment.

Male men were "wermen", female men were "wifmen"; the female form of the word evolved into "woman". Of course, in these degenerate centuries, there aren't any male men left, so no wonder we don't have a word for them anymore :)

Yes I know, being old enough to remember the days when saying "chairperson" or "lizardfolk" was considered an eccentricity or affectation. I just found it amusing that the only monsters in the 2nd edition MM with a separate "Man" in their names are all either asexual or of indeterminable gender (Lizard Man, Mold Man, Fungus Man).

Malignant Marionette

12-12-2008 09:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9719926)

Go for it. There will be a few monsters that overlap, but hey, different opinions, different writing styles, entirely

surmountable problem.

Indeed. Just make sure you're appropriately committed, so it doesn't end up like the Mystara equivalent. I suppose that's also partly because people don't really care about Mystara. I myself thought about the compendium annuals, but I doubt that'd end up too well. :o

noisms

12-13-2008 01:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quite a discussion has been going on in my absence! Good stuff.

Locathah entry is coming up soon.

Belchion

12-13-2008 03:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9719073)
Because it makes no sense. It's not how people think, or behave.

They do! Look at terrorists, look at any totalitarian ideology, look at any genocide. People behave "alien" as you call it, not to protect their family, but to achieve a philosophical construct. To create the "perfect status". Those delusional druids call this "perfect status" balance.

Wakboth

12-13-2008 05:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9724028)
They do! Look at terrorists, look at any totalitarian ideology, look at any genocide. People behave "alien" as you call it, not to protect their family, but to achieve a philosophical construct. To create the "perfect status". Those delusional druids call this "perfect status" balance.

Fanatics are noted for their inflexibility, which makes the TN druid's frequent shifting between fundamentally opposed positions unbelievable to me.

AFAICT the whole thing about TN as a philosophical position of its own, instead of apathy or laissez-faire, comes from Gyga taking the idea of Cosmic Balance from Moorcock and botching it up - especially since Balance there wasn't about neutrality right between Law and Chaos, but about active Harmony.

Red_Rob

12-13-2008 06:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well in basic D&D the concepts of Law and Chaos were pretty much analogous to Good and Evil. Having Law and Chaos as opposing forces in a world not specifically dedicated to some kind of eternal struggle between these forces just doesn't really work. I mean in a two word description of a character's worldview in a standard fantasy setting, why the heck would whether he follows laws or not be considered important enough to be included?

To have something like True Neutral not seem insane you have to have examples of overly Lawful or Good societies not just seem more attractive than the Evil ones. What kind of Druids want to overthrow the good Elven society because it has become "too dominant" and so fight alongside the countryside-despoiling orcs and hobgoblins??

(un)reason

12-13-2008 06:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9724168)

To have something like True Neutral not seem insane you have to have examples of overly Lawful or Good societies not just seem more attractive than the Evil ones. What kind of Druids want to overthrow the good Elven society because it has become "too dominant" and so fight alongside the countryside-despoiling orcs and hobgoblins??

The kind who think that things being too nice all the time makes people soft. Let us not forget that high level druids got extended lifespans, and a remit to shape nature and societies throughout the centuries. You certainly see enough people IRL complaining about dang kids, don't know the first thing about X, Y & Z. Wouldn't last a minute back in my day. I oughta show them. :shakes walking stick: Now imagine them with several centuries extra lifespan, enormous magical power, and a belief that it's their responsibility to keep the balance between nature and civilization, by force if needed.

Red_Rob

12-13-2008 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

You seemed to miss the part about it not seeming insane :D

I agree that works as the weird motivation of one particular group of nutcase druids, but to have it as one of the Core 9 alignments you can choose for your character? Seems far too niche to me.

I think the Law/Chaos axis of the alignment scale should be an optional extra rather than something presented in the core system. It only really works if you have a Moorcock-esque Grand Struggle between Law and Chaos, which basically ends up being Good and Evil with a twist anyway.

noisms

12-13-2008 08:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9724231)
You seemed to miss the part about it not seeming insane :D

I agree that works as the weird motivation of one particular group of nutcase druids, but to have it as one of the Core 9 alignments you can choose for your character? Seems far too niche to me.

I think the Law/Chaos axis of the alignment scale should be an optional extra rather than something presented in the core system. It only really works if you have a Moorcock-esque Grand Struggle between Law and Chaos, which basically ends up being Good and Evil with a twist anyway.

Well, don't forget, True Neutral is considered the rarest alignment. It explicitly states as much in the 2nd edition books, at least.

Red_Rob

12-13-2008 10:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah I guess so. Alignment was always one of the "huh?" things about D&D for me, i never really "got" it. It seemed to be torn between being a personal indicator of morality (which it never really seemed to fit very well), and a kind of badge showing which side you were on in the great alignment based struggles that raged across the world (which were always conspicuously missing from campaigns i played in.)

Anyway, this thread isn't about the alignment system, its about exception based design and egg stealing! I want me some redundant Kuo-Toa knock offs!

JRM

12-13-2008 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9724231)
You seemed to miss the part about it not seeming insane :D

I agree that works as the weird motivation of one particular group of nutcase druids, but to have it as one of the Core 9 alignments you can choose for your character? Seems far too niche to me.

I think the Law/Chaos axis of the alignment scale should be an optional extra rather than something presented in the core system. It only really works if you have a Moorcock-esque Grand Struggle between Law and Chaos, which basically ends up being Good and Evil with a twist anyway.

Yes, those lawful types may try to conceal their malignancy in their quest to crush the individuality of our souls,

so I'm glad you realize they're just Evil with a twist! Anarchy Rules!! The Sea-Caballeros will always ride free!!!

:D

In other words, I am not *entirely* convinced by the equating of Law/Chaos with Good/Evil, although sadly it's a common one. I guess it's because humans are naturally inclined to seek patterns and hence Order, and most are conservative enough to like familiar things to stay the way they are. Even in rpgs like Tekumel which have Law & Chaos deities who are (theoretically) equally "noble" the Gods of Change are usually portrayed as being nastier than the Gods of Stability.

Sleeper

12-14-2008 12:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I could buy True Neutrality if there was a subtle change in the philosophy. While the ethos behind True Neutrality is, well, nonsense, if you look at it from a pragmatic standpoint what it's really about is knocking down the side with all the power, and building up the weaker side. Assassinating crown princes and running guns to the rebels is the same basic idea, if you take the focus from some abstract "Alignment" and change it to political factions. Then, it becomes all about destabilizing the prevailing social order (if there is one) and building up alternatives. In other words, they don't really care about any of the major political powers. True Neutrals don't really care who is in charge. They just don't want one group to take over it all over. Fundamentally, they're playing on the side of anarchy. Or to be more precise, they want a passel small scattered states instead of a single unified empire.

Why then? Not because they believe in anarchy as a core principle (which has almost as many problems as True Neutral), but because whatever they believe in (whether it's the almost-extinct Old Religion, or hugging fuzzy animals) is a fringe movement. If there are a dozen squabbling states all worried about their neighbors, or a dozen competing religions or philosophies all worried about heretics and schisms, it's more likely the True Neutrals'll be ignored. Because, well, they're neutral. Not tied to any particular side. They just want to stop a powerful and centralized government from developing, because then it might start paying attention to them, instead of worrying about its aggressive neighbors. And then they'd be gone.

The Last Conformist

12-14-2008 12:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9724539)
I want me some redundant Kuo-Toa knock offs!

There does seem to be an awful lot of fishy-froggy aquatic humanoids around. Was Gyax a big fan of "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" or something?

Felix

12-14-2008 01:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9724168)

To have something like True Neutral not seem insane you have to have examples of overly Lawful or Good societies not just seem more attractive than the Evil ones. What kind of Druids want to overthrow the good Elven society because it has become "too dominant" and so fight alongside the countryside-despoiling orcs and hobgoblins??

Here are two possibly non-insane reasons for a D&D TN:

1) *True neutral thinks long term.* It seems great to let the elves utterly destroy the hobgoblins, but what happens 20 years from now? Without their totalitarian hobgoblin masters, the goblin population will grow out of control. Rather than facing an army of 1,000 hobgoblins today, which will flee if clearly outnumbered, people will face the 10,000 goblin mob, willing to destroy anything and ready to fight to the death. True Neutral is willing to strengthen the hobgoblins now, knowing the elves will thank them later.

2) *Cosmic traffic control.* In a system with a great-wheel cosmology, the True Neutral factions work to prevent plane crashes (pun intended). Being good sounds nice in a Planescape world, but if too many people become good, you'll wind up in a world filled with Devas. They'll start slaughtering anyone who isn't sufficiently good for their tastes, or be decimated by (comparatively) vast armies of evil creatures which they've forgotten how to deal with on their good-aligned world.

Wakboth

12-14-2008 03:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9724746)

I could buy True Neutrality if there was a subtle change in the philosophy. While the ethos behind True Neutrality is, well, nonsense, if you look at it from a pragmatic standpoint what it's really about is knocking down the side with all the power, and building up the weaker side. Assassinating crown princes and running guns to the rebels is the same basic idea, if you take the focus from some abstract "Alignment" and change it to political factions. Then, it becomes all about destabilizing the prevailing social order (if there is one) and building up alternatives. In other words, they don't really care about any of the major political powers. True Neutrals don't really care who is in charge. They just don't want one group to take over it all over. Fundamentally, they're playing on the side of anarchy. Or to be more precise, they want a passel small scattered states instead of a single unified empire.

That sounds more like proactive CN to me...

Sleeper

12-14-2008 04:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9725075)

That sounds more like proactive CN to me...

If it doesn't involve fish and pranks, it's not Chaotic Neutral :p

(More seriously, I don't see how liking small or competing governments is CN. CN seems to be about personal freedom, or total anarchy.)

Red_Rob

12-14-2008 04:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9724746)

I could buy True Neutrality if there was a subtle change in the philosophy. While the ethos behind True Neutrality is, well, nonsense, if you look at it from a pragmatic standpoint what it's really about is knocking down the side with all the power, and building up the weaker side. Assassinating crown princes and running guns to the rebels is the same basic idea, if you take the focus from some abstract "Alignment" and change it to political factions. Then, it becomes all about destabilizing the prevailing social order (if there is one) and building up alternatives. In other words, they don't really care about any of the major political powers. True Neutrals don't really care who is in charge. They just don't want one group to take over it all over. Fundamentally, they're playing on the side of anarchy. Or to be more precise, they want a passel small scattered states instead of a single unified empire.

Why then? Not because they believe in anarchy as a core principle (which has almost as many problems as True Neutral), but because whatever they believe in (whether it's the almost-extinct Old Religion, or hugging fuzzy animals) is a fringe movement. If there are a dozen squabbling states all worried about their neighbors, or a dozen competing religions or philosophies all worried about heretics and schisms, it's more likely the True Neutrals'll be ignored. Because, well, they're neutral. Not tied to any particular side. They just want to stop a powerful and centralized government from developing, because then it might start paying attention to them, instead of worrying about its aggressive neighbors. And then they'd be gone.

Well that would work if it was about the political power balance, but it isn't. According to the description its about the *Alignment* power balance. Lots of small but lawful kingdoms? True neutral isn't happy about that. It wants to introduce some Chaos! Whoops, now all the competing factions are anarchistic and individualistic? Time to bring in some order!

Even referring to "Law" and "Chaos" without an overall framework of competing cosmic forces becomes farcical. Why would the Druids care if the reigning societies are generally rigid in structure or favour the individual? Wouldn't things like their attitude to the natural world, disposition towards the druids etc. be higher on their list of priorities?

6inTruder

12-14-2008 04:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Any chance of the TN debate sprouting its own thread and this one getting on to the TN fishfolk?

Sleeper

12-14-2008 05:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I think this thread'd be far less interesting if it stayed too much on track. I love the way it veers and then starts to careen through the woods before eventually ending up back on the main path.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9725290)

Well that would work if it was about the political power balance, but it isn't.

That's why I said "if you take the focus from some abstract 'Alignment' and change it to political factions...." :)

Red_Rob

12-14-2008 05:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9725327)

I think this thread'd be far less interesting if it stayed too much on track. I love the way it veers and then starts to careen through the woods before eventually ending up back on the main path.

That's why I said "if you take the focus from some abstract 'Alignment' and change it to political factions...." :)

Yeah, it works much better with politics than some vague cosmic forces. I think that's my main beef with the alignment system in D&D. It's obvious to me that it was designed for a world that is built around the 9 alignments, with clearly defined sides for each alignment and a corresponding cosmic battle between "good", "evil", "order" and "chaos". Gygaxian D&D seems to assume this, along with its "1 plane for each alignment" etc, however it doesn't spell it out. Within this framework things like alignment languages, True Neutral etc. all make sense.

However, this has been marginalised in favour of shoehorning in the "alignment as personal ethics code" view. Which, as we have seen, leads to all sorts of problems as it was not designed for this. In my opinion the whole alignment system should be a setting specific rule for Greyhawk, along with the alignment detecting spells. The main rules should include a general "good vs evil" system with varying grades from blackest evil, through shades of grey, to paladinhood (just so detect evil and stuff still works!).

Whether someone favours an ordered society or anarchy just isn't the lynchpin of their personality in 99% of modern D&D settings.

By the way, just to warn people, I am probably never going to be convinced that the alignment system is applicable to most games, so to prevent this debate from hijacking noisums very entertaining thread I'll agree to finish it here :D

6inTruder

12-14-2008 05:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

To clarify: the TN discussion is really rather interesting, and I think it'd be cause for some broader discussion on its own. So please continue, I just want more monsters.

;)

noisms

12-14-2008 08:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Speaking of more monsters...

Locathah

The Locathah are a rather weak and insipid race, being a kind of cross between mackerel, seahorse and human. However, their blandness and their True Neutrality seems to suit a race of fish-people, and their use of moray eels and portuguese man o' wars in defence adds an injection of interesting weirdness.

Some Locathah roles for an AD&D game:

- Locathah items are highly valued by art collectors;
- They can be hired to act as guides;
- They take tolls from fishermen using their waters;
- They will take whatever means necessary to recover corpses of dead comrades - including drilling through the bottom of a ship to sink it.

Oddly, Locathah are given a movement rate on land - a paltry 1. I had forgotten about this, and thought it was just the Locathah, but it seems other aquatic creatures, such as Merfolk and Aquatic Elves, are also given land movement rates.

(un)reason

12-14-2008 08:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9726935)

Speaking of more monsters...

Oddly, Locathah are given a movement rate on land - a paltry 1. I had forgotten about this, and thought it was just the Locathah, but it seems other aquatic creatures, such as Merfolk and Aquatic Elves, are also given land movement rates.

Yeah. That always interested me. The vast majority of D&D aquatic monsters were either unable to function on land due to physiology (mermen, fish, etc, or seemed to cope with it just fine. Locathah were just about the only one that had proper legs, but not the strength to support themselves properly out of the water, as would be realistic for many sea creatures. It kinda threw the unrealism of other similar D&D creatures into sharp relief.

DMH

12-14-2008 08:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

A comment Wakboth made upthread makes me wonder if they would be a little more interesting if they were anadramous (sp? like salmon) or catadramous (sp? like freshwater eels). If they are forced to migrate, then they could disrupt the freshwater and marine races.

I wish Mongoose or Goodman took a crack at them with the creature series.

The Last Conformist

12-14-2008 10:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

"Anadromous" and "catadromous". The root is *drom* "run", which also gives us among others "dromedary" and "hippodrome".

Sleeper

12-14-2008 10:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9727166)
... and "*hippodrome*".

Which is of course a magical overgrown and awesomely corpulent hippopotamus the size of a small city, which has been partially hollowed out by a careful combination of survey and architecture, complete with a whole maze of aqueducts to filter in nutrition and carry away waste, and which now serves as a sporting arena, amphitheatre, and even gladiatorial battlefield; all of which take place beneath the pulsating ribcage that serves the ceiling.

The Last Conformist

12-15-2008 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

A loxodrome, meanwhile, is a salmon similarly refitted into an airship.

Vultur10

12-15-2008 12:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9727207)

Which is of course a magical overgrown and awesomely corpulent hippopotamus the size of a small city, which has been partially hollowed out by a careful combination of survey and architecture, complete with a whole maze of aqueducts to filter in nutrition and carry away waste, and which now serves as a sporting arena, amphitheatre, and even gladiatorial battlefield; all of which take place beneath the pulsating ribcage that serves the ceiling.

That is AWESOME.

JRM

12-15-2008 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9726966)

Yeah. That always interested me. The vast majority of D&D aquatic monsters were either unable to function on land due to physiology (mermen, fish, etc, or seemed to cope with it just fine. Locathah were just about the only one that had proper legs, but not the strength to support themselves properly out of the water, as would be realistic for many sea creatures. It kinda threw the unrealism of other similar D&D creatures into sharp relief.

Yes, that's odd. Locathah have got what appear to be functional legs but move no faster on land than a merman. Their anatomy must be really odd. If their feet were fixed to run in the same direction as their legs (like a scuba diver swimming with flippers) it'd make sense, but their pictures shows them with feet at right-angle to their legs, like a regular bipedal humanoid.

But then, going by their 2nd ed MM illustration Tritons have humanoid legs with flippers but can't move on land at all - at least in 1st edition it showed Tritons with a pair of fishtails for legs, which made their inability to walk on land make sense.

JRM

12-15-2008 01:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9727440)

A loxodrome, meanwhile, is a salmon similarly refitted into an airship.

A submarine surely, wouldn't you mutate a roc or something for an aerodrome (or a parrot and make a polydrome :)).

If you wanted a living vessel that moved in both directions with equal faculty you could stick a British entertainer and an Alaskan senator back-to-back, resulting in a palindrome.;)

Red_Rob

12-15-2008 02:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

As the description mentions nothing about a dedication to balance in the Universe they seem to be going for the "True Neutral as apathy" stance here. I find their High intelligence a little at odds with their "stone age" technology, but i suppose metalworking is a little difficult underwater!

The Last Conformist

12-15-2008 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9727604)

A submarine surely, wouldn't you mutate a roc or something for an aerodrome (or a parrot and make a polydrome :)).

Nah. If you absolutely need something warmblooded (pampered passengers don't want to freeze to death these days), you'd use a [huge manatee](#).

noisms

12-15-2008 03:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9727671)

As the description mentions nothing about a dedication to balance in the Universe they seem to be going for the "True Neutral as apathy" stance here. I find their High intelligence a little at odds with their "stone age" technology, but i suppose metalworking is a little difficult underwater!

Yeah, a little difficult to get a forge going. ;)

demiurge1138

12-15-2008 04:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The thing I only recently noticed about locathath is that they're damned smart. If I ever use them in any capacity (still a long shot), I'll give them levels in psionic classes and treat them sort of like movie-version Abe Sapien from Hellboy. Erudite fishmen with psychic powers and British accents.

Sleeper

12-15-2008 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9727782)

Nah. If you absolutely need something warmblooded (pampered passengers don't want to freeze to death these days), you'd use a huge manatee.

The tiny head and hugely bloated body of Steller's sea cow ([here](#)) looks like a manatee well on its way to become a bioengineered edifice, perhaps a submarine cruise liner. They certainly didn't survive long in the face of hunting; less than 30 years after their discovery in 1741 by a Westerner they were extinct. Huge, too. Steller contradicted himself, but he estimated either 4 (elephant-size) or 23.4 (baleen whale-size) tons and about 26 feet long.

The Last Conformist

12-15-2008 05:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

23 tonnes seems unreasonably high - scaling up a dugong to that length gives a weight of about six and a half tonnes. Minke whales, of similar length, weigh 5-10 tonnes (teaching us that "baleen whale size" isn't necessarily all that impressive).

Sleeper

12-15-2008 08:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9728133)

23 tonnes seems unreasonably high - scaling up a dugong to that length gives a weight of about six and a half tonnes. Minke whales, of similar length, weigh 5-10 tonnes (teaching us that "baleen whale size" isn't necessarily all that impressive).

There was no scientific measurement. Just a naturalist looking at it, making some guesses, and writing two numbers in his journal. Better than some of those giant anacondas from Amazon myths :).

That's still pretty impressive. Five to ten tons, or even four, is larger than any terrestrial animal except the elephant. And the Minke whale is the 2nd smallest baleen whale. The mid-sized ones are 30 to 40 tons, with the blues reaching over 100 (more than double that, rarely).

Now scale the sea cow up to the size of a cruise ship (*Queen Mary 2*, 1,132 ft), and it's about 330,000 tons. Then shed about $\frac{3}{4}$ that weight by hollowing it out for passengers. Ignoring the obvious structural problems, it'd probably have to be immobily docked as a kind of sea-station just to run the pipes necessary to feed it. Or perhaps it lives up to its scientific name; it's a *siren*, and whole pods of whales heed the call a dozen times a day, nuzzle up to its giganantic body in ecstasy, and are slowly absorbed into its mass.

Vultur10

12-15-2008 01:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9728755)

Or perhaps it lives up to its scientific name; it's a siren, and whole pods of whales heed the call a dozen times a day, nuzzle up to its giganantic body in ecstasy, and are slowly absorbed into its mass.

That is so cool. +1 awesome point.

The Last Conformist

12-15-2008 02:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9728755)

There was no scientific measurement.

I know. That's why I'm making statements of reasonableness rather than fact. :)

noisms

12-15-2008 08:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lurker

We haven't discussed bad art in a while....well, since the Lich entry anyway...but here's a prime opportunity, because let's face it: the Lurker picture is a genuine shocker. It's one of those cases where I really think that even I could have done a better job, at the age of 11, if only the designers had asked me. It's the least evocative bit of fantasy art I think I've ever seen. It looks like a grey cow pat with eyes.

Lurker

The Lurker base unit is essentially a manta ray which looks like stone and attaches itself to ceilings so it can drop down on adventurers and eat them. One of those classic dungeon-ecology creatures in other words; something that couldn't exist in a world which isn't full of subterranean labyrinths being explored by naive spelunkers.

The Lurker is also one of those unusual instances of a clearly magical beastie being explained away by pseudoscience: why bother talk about the levitation being generated by gases held in sacs - clearly nonsense - when you could just say "it's magic"?

Lurkers' eggs are worth 900gp, and hatchlings 1,100. Their gases can also be used for *Potions of Levitation*, so there's plenty of scope for

Trapper

The Trapper is like an anti-Lurker in that it sits on the floor and envelops people, rather than by dropping on them. Otherwise it's pretty similar, although its skin can be used to make +1 leather armour.

Forest Trapper (Miner)

Miners are slightly more interesting (and slightly more believable) in that they operate by burying themselves in the forest floor and stretching out poisonous, barbed tendrils through the soil to paralyse its prey.

The Lurker entry is right up there with the Leech in containing four silly exception-based-design rules:

- There is a flat 10% chance of detecting a Lurker
- Trappers have a 95% chance of being undetected
- Passers-by have a 25% chance of stepping on a Miner's barbs (75% if surprised)
- Druids and rangers have a 5% chance of stopping a Miner's barbs if they are not surprised

There surely has to be an easier way.

Sleeper

12-15-2008 09:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Thanks, Vultur10.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

We haven't discussed bad art in a while....well, since the Lich entry anyway...but here's a prime opportunity, because let's face it: the Lurker picture is a genuine shocker. It's one of those cases where I really think that even I could have done a better job, at the age of 11, if only the designers had asked me. It's the least evocative bit of fantasy art I think I've ever seen. It looks like a grey cow pat with eyes.

Well, why don't you put that to the test? You're probably not 11 anymore, but I'm sure you have a copy of MS Paint or something similar on your machine. Let's see your rendition. :)

Wakshaani

12-15-2008 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

The Lurker entry is right up there with the Leech in containing four silly exception-based-design rules:

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- Druids and rangers have a 5% chance of stopping a Miner's barbs if they are not suprised

There surely has to be an easier way.

Also, the "Only surprised on a 5% chance" creatures vs the "Not surprised 95% of teh time" guys is always a good rule fight.

noisms

12-15-2008 09:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9730397)

Well, why don't you put that to the test? You're probably not 11 anymore, but I'm sure you have a copy of MS Paint or something similar on your machine. Let's see your rendition. :)

For some reason I can only put up attachments of 1 byte in size.

Sleeper

12-15-2008 10:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730466)

For some reason I can only put up attachments of 1 byte in size.

Attachments were blocked for standard users in most forums a long time ago. Have to link to an external site.

JRM

12-16-2008 12:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

Lurker

We haven't discussed bad art in a while....well, since the Lich entry anyway...but here's a prime opportunity, because let's face it: the Lurker picture is a genuine shocker. It's one of those cases where I really think that even I could have done a better job, at the age of 11, if only the designers had asked me. It's the least evocative bit of fantasy art I

think I've ever seen. It looks like a grey cow pat with eyes.

Well in all fairness I think the Lurker Above and Trapper have always had pretty crappy art. Let's face it, they're a monster that's easy to draw badly - think about the various goofy renditions of the Mimic we've had over the years.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

LurkerThe Lurker is also one of those unusual instances of a clearly magical beastie being explained away by pseudoscience: why bother talk about the levitation being generated by gases held in sacs - clearly nonsense - when you could just say "it's magic"?

Lurkers' eggs are worth 900gp, and hatchlings 1,100. Their gases can also be used for Potions of Levitation, so there plenty of scope for

Plenty of scope for what, have you been censored by the Lawful aligned tyrants? Fight the man!

ahem

Anyway, it's clearly magical gas. Air at sea level masses around 1.2 kilograms per cubic metre (about 1.2 ounces per cubic foot) so, if we say a lurker above is two feet thick then it's twenty foot diameter would give it a weight of 47 pounds. If a Lurker Above was really that lightweight why can't its victims punch their way out of it like it was an inflated paper bag? Also, the Lurker Above has ten Hit Dice, around the same level as an Ankylosaurus (9 HD) or African Elephant (11 HD), both animals that weigh 4-5 tons - which is a far more reasonable weight for an animal twenty foot across.

That strongly suggest that the Lurker Above's gas uses some kind of negative mass / anti-gravity levitation effect like the "Eighth Ray Buoyancy Tanks" of the Flyers in Edgar Rice Burrough's Martian books. That would also explain why it's so useful for *potions of levitation*. Some of the other AD&D monsters that use gas for buoyancy may do the same, such as Beholders.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

Trapper

The Trapper is like an anti-Lurker in that it sits on the floor and envelops people, rather than by dropping on them. Otherwise it's pretty similar, although its skin can be used to make +1 leather armour.

What I find weird about the Trappers is that they're highly intelligent. What use is a 13-14 Intelligence to a creature who does nothing more complicated than pretend to be a floor? At least in 1st edition AD&D they explained this by having Trappers be able to **talk** and willing to make bargains - e.g. I'll give you treasure if you don't kill me, I'll guard this corridor and let you pass safely if you feed me regularly. That hints they were originally another mad wizard's treasure guardian beast, like some sages think was the origin of the Mimic. Of course, Trappers are a bit redundant in a world that has Mimics - the mad wizard could just create an oversized Mimic and have it spread itself across the floor if they wanted a monster to fill a trapper's niche.

Wakboth

12-16-2008 12:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9730292)

The Lurker base unit is essentially a manta ray which looks like stone and attaches itself to ceilings so it can drop down on adventurers and eat them. One of those classic dungeon-ecology creatures in other words; something that couldn't exist in a world which isn't full of subterranean labyrinths being explored by naive spelunkers.

Along with piercer, mimic and... I think ropers would count too, don't you think?

There are a lot of monsters whose shtick is "I'm an innocent dungeon feature, don't mind me... rAWR!" :)

demiurge1138

12-16-2008 12:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I was confused by the lurker art when I was a kid. Doesn't look a damn thing like it's supposed to.

I've only used a lurker once, but it was good fun. Put one in a room with a bunch of mimics. Soundtrack full of plucking, creepy violins.

Kakita Kojiro

12-16-2008 01:52 AM

Here's the thing about the lurker: why does it *need* to levitate? I mean, it's not pretending to be a dungeon drop-ceiling -- it's pretending to be the ceiling, itself.

There is no need for it to hover up there, *just* near the ceiling. Adventurers do not exclaim "hey, what is that, hovering up there blocking our view of the ceiling?" It would be better to just *stick to the ceiling*, and not worry about the levitating rigmarole altogether.

Nonetheless, this whole class of monsters cries out to be deconstructed in some sort of "Flip this Dungeon" sendup. Two whacky wizards -- one a hot chick, the other a quirky elf guy -- have to renovate an older dungeon with the help of the resident kobolds (with heartwarming backstory), and only two days before the adventurers show up! No time to install parquet flooring, but they've hired a cooperative trapper that has a faux marble finish. That beautiful, new ceiling fresco? Lurker with a tattoo fetish. And over here we'll put the mimics, complete with color-coordinated throw pillows.

Will they finish the dungeon redesign in time? We'll find out... right after this commercial.

psychojosh13

12-16-2008 02:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9731409)

Nonetheless, this whole class of monsters cries out to be deconstructed in some sort of "Flip this Dungeon" sendup. Two whacky wizards -- one a hot chick, the other a quirky elf guy -- have to renovate an older dungeon with the help of the resident kobolds (with heartwarming backstory), and only two days before the adventurers show up! No time to install parquet flooring, but they've hired a cooperative trapper that has a faux marble finish. That beautiful, new ceiling fresco? Lurker with a tattoo fetish. And over here we'll put the mimics, complete with color-coordinated throw pillows.

Will they finish the dungeon redesign in time? We'll find out... right after this commercial.

I want to play this game. Seriously. It'll make nice filler in the X-Crawl off-season.

(un)reason

12-16-2008 03:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9731409)

Here's the thing about the lurker: why does it need to levitate?

So it can get back up after doing the killing. Otherwise, it'd have to painstakingly shuffle up the walls again like the piercer.

Kakita Kojiro

12-16-2008 03:58 AM

It is not as though the lurker doesn't have time to get back up to the ceiling (after safely digesting his food, of course. don't swim for 30-minutes after eating, kids!). Adventurers aren't coming through as though the dungeon were a carnival ride needing a room reset every 5-minutes.

demiurge1138

12-16-2008 08:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9731920)

It is not as though the lurker doesn't have time to get back up to the ceiling (after safely digesting his food, of course don't swim for 30-minutes after eating, kids!). Adventurers aren't coming through as though the dungeon were a carnival ride needing a room reset every 5-minutes.

Yes, but it's damned inconvenient for the lurker if it's flopping around on the floor and, say, a couple of trolls wander by. Levitation is a perfectly valid anti-predator adaptation in the weird, hyper-Lamarckian world of

D&D.

Red_Rob

12-16-2008 08:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Picture the scene: A group of adventurers carefully advance down the corridor, their flickering torchlight illuminating the walls as the space opens out into a small room. In the center of the room is a large brass bound oak chest. One of the brave warriors moves cautiously towards the chest and hesitantly pulls the lid...

To find his hand stuck fast. A pseudopod strikes out from the chest and hits him across the head. "Mimic!" he shouts in panic. As the remainder of the group rush towards him the ceiling drops down on them, the lurker enveloping them in its folds. One of the heroes breaks free, wondering why its a lot lighter than it used to be. At this point the trapper masquerading as the floor of the room folds up around the hapless escapee. As the stunjellies arranged as the walls crawl towards the trapped heroes sunlight begins to stream through the gaps created by their movement. At this point the carefully constructed impression of an underground area collapses and the forlorn warrior stuck to the mimic realises the horrible truth as he is slowly digested...

"There was no dungeon! *We were in a field all along!*"

Kakita Kojiro

12-16-2008 09:02 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9732889)

Yes, but it's damned inconvenient for the lurker if it's flopping around on the floor and, say, a couple of trolls wander by. Levitation is a perfectly valid anti-predator adaptation in the weird, hyper-Lamarckian world of D&D.

Hey, now, trolls have to eat, too! I'm sure they'd like a nice, thick lurker steak for supper. Free range. Fed on 100% organic adventurers. Yum.

And I suppose we're assuming that lurkers are completely helpless once they've dropped if they can't levitate back up. Or something. Best not to think on it...

... Cause then we'd realize that trolls probably *don't* need a nice lurker steak, since they can just take turns chopping off each other's body parts and letting them regrow.

Also, for some reason, this had me picturing a backlog of trolls, kobolds, rust monsters, etc. -- all waiting to get past the lurker after it has just dropped on another hapless adventuring party. With a big "Lurker X-ing" sign on the dungeon wall, of course.

this thread may have broken my brain

see

12-16-2008 12:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9731100)

Along with piercer, mimic and... I think ropers would count too, don't you think?

There are a lot of monsters whose shtick is "I'm an innocent dungeon feature, don't mind me... rAWR!" :)

MM has cloaklers, lurkers/trappers, mimics, piercers, and ropers. MC Annual 1 has lock lurkers (look like coins), house hunter mimics (above-ground mimics that look like entire buildings), and xavers (a sword-shaped rust monster).

Gargoyles are a natural choice of a symbiote for large house hunter mimics.

Galeb duhr, miners, treants, and the 1e wolf-in-sheep's-clothing, of course, are similarly hard to spot.

And then there are the gas spores, of course, which are harmless dungeon features if left alone, but look like a threat . . .

Malignant Marionette

12-16-2008 05:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9733116)

... Cause then we'd realize that trolls probably don't need a nice lurker steak, since they can just take turns chopping off each other's body parts and letting them regrow.

Considering it takes a week for them to regenerate lost body parts, I doubt that'd be too efficient in the long run. ;)

JRM

12-16-2008 09:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9734612)

Considering it takes a week for them to regenerate lost body parts, I doubt that'd be too efficient in the long run. ;)

Well it's *up to* a week, so presumably if the trolls took small parts they'd regenerate faster. Maybe they can tear off a few fingers or a hand every couple of hours?

However, the basic premise is likely wrong, since I doubt the troll gains mass when regenerating. If trolls could magically grow flesh from out of thin air (or wherever the matter came from), they likely wouldn't have the ravenous appetites they're credited with. Tear a troll's arm off and destroy it, it probably becomes a skinnier troll, because its total weight is lowered by the mass of the lost limb, then it will want to replace its lost body

weight by eating.

noisms

12-16-2008 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9733049)

Picture the scene: A group of adventurers carefully advance down the corridor, their flickering torchlight illuminating the walls as the space opens out into a small room. In the center of the room is a large brass bound oak chest. One of the brave warriors moves cautiously towards the chest and hesitantly pulls the lid...

To find his hand stuck fast. A pseudopod strikes out from the chest and hits him across the head. "Mimic!" he shouts in panic. As the remainder of the group rush towards him the ceiling drops down on them, the lurker enveloping them in its folds. One of the heroes breaks free, wondering why it's a lot lighter than it used to be. At this point the trapper masquerading as the floor of the room folds up around the hapless escapee. As the stunjellies arranged as the walls crawl towards the trapped heroes sunlight begins to stream through the gaps created by their movement. At this point the carefully constructed impression of an underground area collapses and the forlorn warrior stuck to the mimic realises the horrible truth as he is slowly digested...

"There was no dungeon! We were in a field all along!"

That's an almost Lovecraftian ending.

DMH

12-16-2008 10:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Does anyone have the link to the previous thread? It isn't in the OP or first page.

Wakboth

12-16-2008 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9735465)

Does anyone have the link to the previous thread? It isn't in the OP or first page.

1st thread, A to Gi: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=389945>

2nd thread, Gi to Ki: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=404795>

DMH

12-16-2008 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Thanks Wak.

There is too much good stuff to let it fall down the rabbit hole.

noisms

12-16-2008 11:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9735568)

1st thread, A to Gi: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=389945>

2nd thread, Gi to Ki: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=404795>

Thanks for that. I was just about to go looking for those.

Kakita Kojiro

12-16-2008 11:41 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9735253)

However, the basic premise is likely wrong, since I doubt the troll gains mass when regenerating. If trolls could magically grow flesh from out of thin air (or wherever the matter came from), they likely wouldn't have the ravenous appetites they're credited with. Tear a troll's arm off and destroy it, it probably becomes a skinnier troll, because its total weight is lowered by the mass of the lost limb, then it will want to replace its lost body weight by eating.

I *totally* said that it was best not to think about it. This is why. :D

(anyway, it'll all come back up in the T's, I'm sure. ;))

Sleeper

12-17-2008 01:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9735465)

Does anyone have the link to the previous thread? It isn't in the OP or first page.

The [let's read tag](#) (at the bottom of each page) is also a good way to find the prequels, as well as related threads.

Red_Rob

12-17-2008 04:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9735351)
That's an almost Lovecraftian ending.

I always think of those terrible twist endings as more The Twilight Zone or The Outer Limits... "To serve man! Its a cook book!"

noisms

12-17-2008 07:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9736835)
I always think of those terrible twist endings as more The Twilight Zone or The Outer Limits... "To serve man! Its a cook book!"

"In the end it was not guns or bombs that defeated the flying saucers, but the humblest of God's creatures... Tyrannosaurus Rex."

Wakboth

12-17-2008 03:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9735589)
There is too much good stuff to let it fall down the rabbit hole.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9735685)
Thanks for that. I was just about to go looking for those.

"Subscribe to thread" is your friend. :)

noisms

12-17-2008 11:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lycanthrope (S-Werebo)

I'm damned if I'm doing these entry-by-entry; I learned that lesson from the Dragons and the Giants. So we'll split the lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) into two groups.

Seawolf

Seawolves are unusual in that they're a three-way hybrid rather than the usual human-animal cross, being a mixture of seal, wolf and human. They're also (I think) the only lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) who can be harmed by ordinary weapons.

Seawolves are pretty much what you would expect: Werewolves, but aquatic. They like raiding ships, piracy, and wenching, and generally acting like a bad sort. Probably their most interesting aspect is their longing for their previous life, which can cause them to try to make contact with past family and friends.

Werebat

A Ravenloft-specific lycanthrope (therianthrope, whatever), the Werebat is probably the most boring - at least in my opinion. I prefer my lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) to be the savage, brutal type rather than irritating fluttery kind.

"While werebats do look upon humans and demihumans as animals to be devoured," the MM says, "They are not cruel or evil in their attacks. They simply regard such beings as having a lower place in the food chain. Werebats will, typically, refer to themselves as 'predators of the night.'" Why are they Neutral Evil then? Odd.

Werebear

Werebears are the first of the Good lycanthropes (therianthr.... etc.), which seems like a bit of a crock to me. Where's the fun in a Good lycanthrope (ursidanthrope?)? That said, I like the concept of a Werebear - a sort of sage (a proper one that is, as opposed to the Monstrous Manual style sages conjecturing about the sexual habits of bugbears or what have you) who lives in the woods, gathering magical artifacts and ancient scrolls and suchlike, then indulging in a bit of light cannibalism.

Wereboar

For some reason Wereboars were always my favourite of the Man-Animals. I'm not sure why, because reading over the entry now, nothing stands out as being very interesting or noteworthy. I suppose they would be best making an appearance as a misunderstood "monster" who are being unfairly targeted by local villagers; the PCs could be originally hired to kill them but come to see it from their point of view. Then again that has 'railroad' written all over it.

HaplessVictim

12-18-2008 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

Lycanthrope (S-Werebo)

Werebears are the first of the Good lycanthropes (therianthr.... etc.), which seems like a bit of a crock to me. Where's the fun in a Good lycanthrope (ursidanthrope?)?

Unsurprisingly, the werebear is straight out of Tolkien (oh lord, that sounds like the name of a bad rap filk, "straight outta Tolkien, a crazy motherf*cker name Gimli!")

Anyway, I always felt that, although it worked for Beorn, the idea of a good werecreature doesn't work in general. Mythically, lycanthropy is supposed to be a horrifying curse: literally robbing you of your humanity once a month and causing (or allowing) you to do bestial things that damn your soul for eternity. Somehow it lacks mystery and poetry to be doomed, on each full moon, to go out onto the moors and eat berries and do good deeds.

Kapten

12-18-2008 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

[size="5"]

"While werebats do look upon humans and demihumans as animals to be devoured," the MM says, "They are not cruel or evil in their attacks. They simply regard such beings as having a lower place in the food chain. Werebats will, typically, refer to themselves as 'predators of the night.'" Why are they Neutral Evil then? Odd.

Well, that attitude is common for many robbers and hitmen as well. "Nothing personal, I just want your money/life." Yet, robbing and murder is generally regarded as evil practises.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

[size="5"]

Werebear

Werebears are the first of the Good lycanthropes (therianthr.... etc.), which seems like a bit of a crock to me. Where's the fun in a Good lycanthrope (ursidanthrope?)? That said, I like the concept of a Werebear - a sort of sage (a proper one that is, as opposed to the Monstrous Manual style sages conjecturing about the sexual habits of bugbears or what have you) who lives in the woods, gathering magical artifacts and ancient scrolls and suchlike, then indulging in a bit of light cannibalism.

I think werebears are based on Beorn from the Hobbit, that probably explains their good habits. Coming from a country with many bears, I can say that most myths regarding bears aren't portraying them as good guys ;).

Vultur10

12-18-2008 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9737594)

"In the end it was not guns or bombs that defeated the flying saucers, but the humblest of God's creatures... Tyrannosaurus Rex."

Now THAT would be an awesome story/episode - dinosaurs vs. aliens!

Kakita Kojiro

12-18-2008 02:11 AM

Although Beorn was *probably* the inspiration for making werebears Good... that is not really an appropriate alignment for what Beorn does in the Hobbit. Gandalf has to trick Beorn into offering hospitality to the dwarves, which he only grudgingly does after getting interested in their story. That's the only reason he shows up later, too.

He hated goblins, sure -- but they were his only real neighbors (other than giant spiders in Mirkwood). So he's got a fearsome reputation, is antisocial, and doesn't like his neighbors. That seems more properly Neutral (and *not* TN!) territory to me.

Which makes D&D's werecarebears kind of perplexing, really.

Kapten

12-18-2008 02:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9740800)

... is antisocial...

Minor nitpick, but I guess you are thinking of "asocial." Antisocial is about the defenition of D&D Evil ;).

Mr. Teapot

12-18-2008 02:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9733116)

... Cause then we'd realize that trolls probably don't need a nice lurker steak, since they can just take turns chopping off each other's body parts and letting them regrow.

In Eberron, they do.

Red_Rob

12-18-2008 02:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 9740494)

*Unsurprisingly, the werebear is straight out of Tolkien (oh lord, that sounds like the name of a bad rap filk, "straight outta Tolkien, a crazy motherf*cker name Gimli!")*

snip

If you want Tolkien based raps check out <http://www.lordsoftherhymes.com/>. With lyrics like "My name is Merry and i'm 5 foot tall. I used to F*&\$ Sh*\$ up at Brandybuck hall!" your rap example isnt actually that far from the truth!

Regarding Lycanthropes, does anyone know the origins of the Seawolves? It seems really weird to randomly have wolf/seal crossbreeds when every other Lycanthrope (Therianthrope, what... wait that was Noisms gag!) is just a single creature. Is there some kind of mythological precedent for this, or had the designers just noticed we'd gone 10 or so pages in a D&D monster book without a monster that looked like 2 random animals crossbred and decided to throw them together?

Wakboth

12-18-2008 03:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

Lycanthrope (S-Werebo)

Seawolf

Seawolves are unusual in that they're a three-way hybrid rather than the usual human-animal cross, being a mixture of seal, wolf and human. They're also (I think) the only lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) who can be harmed by ordinary weapons.

Seawolves are pretty much what you would expect: Werewolves, but aquatic. They like raiding ships, piracy, and wenching, and generally acting like a bad sort. Probably their most interesting aspect is their longing for their previous life, which can cause them to try to make contact with past family and friends.

They're a bit wonky critters, created because (I think) of the name ("sea wolf" = "pirate" or raider). So they're basically pun monsters!

Quote:

Werebat

A Ravenloft-specific lycanthrope (therianthrope, whatever), the Werebat is probably the most boring - at least in my opinion. I prefer my lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) to be the savage, brutal type rather than irritating fluttery kind.

I think werebats might make good distractions or stand-ins for vampires (bat-like monsters attacking people, sucking their blood, and hiding during the day...), or vampiric minions... or heck, why not cheat a bit and make a vampire werebat, to totally throw the players off!

Quote:

Werebear

Werebears are the first of the Good lycanthropes (therianthr.... etc.), which seems like a bit of a crock to me. Where's the fun in a Good lycanthrope (ursidanthrope?)?

The "sage" angle is pretty good; another one might be that they're the "zen" lycanthropes, who've come to terms with their transformations, balancing human and bear harmoniously. Koan-spouting wilderness sages that can be talked into helping the locals when the ninja wererats (Go clan Eshin!) invade...

Quote:

Wereboar

For some reason Wereboars were always my favourite of the Man-Animals.

On the other hand, I've always found wereboars the most boar-ing werebeasts... the non-evil roles are IMO better filled by either werebears or weretigers. I did use a wereboar to make a Ryoga Hibiki (from *Ranma*) cameo once, though: a stubborn, wandering wereboar with a thick skull and a grudge on the PCs based on them foiling his romantic plans. (True to the form, the players had no idea what he was talking about!)

Brandi

12-18-2008 03:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9740979)

Regarding Lycanthropes, does anyone know the origins of the Seawolves? It seems really weird to randomly have wolf/seal crossbreeds when every other Lycanthrope (Therianthrope, what... wait that was Noisms gag!) is just a single creature. Is there some kind of mythological precedent for this, or had the designers just noticed we'd gone 10 or so pages in a D&D monster book without a monster that looked like 2 random animals crossbred and decided to throw them together?

I only first saw them in Monster Manual II back in the day, and I figured it was just a desire to come up with an aquatic lycanthrope-- though I thought weresharks were there already. Given that they have a wolfman form that somewhat resembles the hybrid form of the regular D&D werewolf, they may have been thought up as a way to confuse adventurers-- the werebat **definitely** was (their MO strongly resembles that of a vampire, so if the adventurers show up with stake and holy water, they're in for a surprise).

Mr. Teapot

12-18-2008 04:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9740979)

Regarding Lycanthropes, does anyone know the origins of the Seawolves? It seems really weird to randomly have wolf/seal crossbreeds when every other Lycanthrope (Therianthrope, what... wait that was Noisms gag!) is just a single creature.

Arguably, all the other lycanthropes are just variations on the werewolf anyway. Outside of D&D and its ilk, you see pretty much just werewolves. So if one particular shapechanger is going to get an unnecessary underwater version, it's the werewolf.

Then you have D&D's tendency to create [unnecessary underwater versions of humanoid races](#). You get underwater humans (different from mermen, I think), underwater elves, underwater Orcs, halflings, goblins, trolls, Beholders, every PC race in the 3rd ed PHB, etc. So eventually, someone was bound to combine these two factors and create underwater lycanthropes.

The Last Conformist

12-18-2008 04:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

ursidanthrope?

"Arctanthrope" would me more in line with lycanthrope and therianthrope, using a classical Greek word rather than a Neo-Latin oddity like "ursid".

Red_Rob

12-18-2008 04:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 9741237)

*I only first saw them in Monster Manual II back in the day, and I figured it was just a desire to come up with an aquatic lycanthrope-- though I thought weresharks were there already. Given that they have a wolfman form that somewhat resembles the hybrid form of the regular D&D werewolf, they may have been thought up as a way to confuse adventurers-- the werebat *definitely* was (their MO strongly resembles that of a vampire, so if the adventurers show up with stake and holy water, they're in for a surprise).*

Yeah, a nice surprise! Rather than a charm-casting, level draining, 8 hit dice, gaseous forming badass they find a couple of 4hd D4 damage goons. It doesn't help that they both have the same vulnerability (+1 weapons). If you're gonna trick the players at least have the big reveal elicit gasps and moans of dread, not sighs of relief!

Kakita Kojiro

12-18-2008 04:46 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9740869)

Minor nitpick, but I guess you are thinking of "asocial." Antisocial is about the definition of D&D Evil ;).

Beorn is both asocial (does not associate with anyone else) *and* antisocial (opposed, antagonistic, hostile, etc. to associating with anyone else).

D&D Evil may be either social or not; Lawful Evil is certainly a social Evil. If you're not associating with others, you have no minions to order about, which is one of the big selling points of LE!

On underwater theiranth... whatever... was in Ravenloft that had weremantas? I remember thinking that was a rather stupid idea, but that the illustration of the man-manta ray hybrid form looked rather cool.

Wereseals would make more sense for D&D, but I think that fantasy trope got captured by selkie-type monsters (which I can't recall in which MM or edition made their appearance).

Wakboth

12-18-2008 05:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9741461)

Wereseals would make more sense for D&D, but I think that fantasy trope got captured by selkie-type monsters (which I can't recall in which MM or edition made their appearance).

I think selkies showed up first in MM2 for 1e; they definitely are in 2e MM.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

[
They're also (I think) the only lycanthropes (therianthropes, whatever) who can be harmed by ordinary weapons.

Lesser seawolves can be hit by normal weapons. Did they drop the greater from the MM?

kelvingreen

12-18-2008 06:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9735253)

Well it's up to a week, so presumably if the trolls took small parts they'd regenerate faster. Maybe they can tear off a few fingers or a hand every couple of hours?

I am reminded of Grom the Paunch, the *Warhammer* goblin who ate a troll steak, which continues to regenerate in his belly while his stomach juices at the same time dissolve it. As a result, he is in a state of constant indigestion, is vastly bloated, but has minor regenerative powers himself.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9737594)

"In the end it was not guns or bombs that defeated the flying saucers, but the humblest of God's creatures... Tyrannosaurus Rex."

Beautiful.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)

Seawolf

Seawolves are unusual in that they're a three-way hybrid rather than the usual human-animal cross, being a mixture of seal, wolf and human.

Undoubtedly they'll turn out to have been borrowed wholesale from some Nordic myth, but I've never been able to take these guys seriously. I think it's the picture; not even DiTerlizzi can make a seal with a dog head look threatening. It just ends up looking like a "mermaid" from a sideshow.

noisms

12-18-2008 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9741795)
Beautiful.

It's part of a Scary Door episode from *Futurama*, so unfortunately I can't take credit.

Brandi

12-18-2008 08:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Red_Rob (Post 9741450)
Yeah, a nice surprise! Rather than a charm-casting, level draining, 8 hit dice, gaseous forming badass they find a couple of 4hd D4 damage goons. It doesn't help that they both have the same vulnerability (+1 weapons). If you're gonna trick the players at least have the big reveal elicit gasps and moans of dread, not sighs of relief!

Outside of Ravenloft they're no great shakes. IN Ravenloft, where +1 weapons are a damn lucky thing, it's another matter. Lycanthropy is also far less easy to cure in the Demiplane...

[FWIW, the one published adventure I have with a werebat appears to have a 4th-level party in mind, who would probably be TPKed against a vampire. In 3rd edition, where the human form of the were can have levels in various character classes, it gets even more interesting, especially if that includes spellcasting.]

randomgamer8466

12-18-2008 08:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Where can one find a werebat for 3e?

Sleeper

12-18-2008 09:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9742289)
Where can one find a werebat for 3e?

Minus the flavor, you can just make one using the rules in MM using the dire bat (the ordinary bat is too small). I believe there's also one in Monsters of Faerûn.

demiurge1138

12-18-2008 09:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, Monsters of Faerun (and then its pseudo-update, Lost Empires of Faerun) has werebats. But lycanthropes are damn easy to make in 3.x.

I had a PC who was a wereboar once. Not by choice, mind. The party was in Eberron, doing various tasks for the Llesh Haruuc (hobgoblin emperor) ala Hercules in order to earn a boon from him, and one of the tasks was to hunt the Boar of the Torlac Moor, which had killed any and all hobgoblin hunters who had tried to take it down. The party tracked it to a ruin, killed it, cut off its head and ate its flesh.

Then I had them make Fortitude saves.

The elven rogue failed, and became a boar that very night. Since Eberron has twelve moons, she was transformed... yeah, just about every night in a month. And since in Eberron, lycanthropes are very rare, and subject to purges by the Church of the Silver Flame... well, actually, that game ended in a TPK before the inquisitors tracked the party down, but they were coming for her!

DMH

12-18-2008 08:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There is a 3.5 setting based on how a high lycanthrope population affects a region- Steve Trustum's SpirosBlaak (from Green Ronin). It has some high points and low ones, but the constant wars between the humans/dwarves and werecritters seem almost constant in the history. Elves aren't in the region and in this world are raiders.

I wish it sold well enough to get a supplement on the lycanthrope population.

Kapten

12-18-2008 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9741461)

Beorn is both asocial (does not associate with anyone else) and antisocial (opposed, antagonistic, hostile, etc. to associating with anyone else).

D&D Evil may be either social or not; Lawful Evil is certainly a social Evil. If you're not associating with others, you have no minions to order about, which is one of the big selling points of LE!

If antisocials wouldn't want to interact with other people, the world would be a better place. Antisocials want to interact with others, they want domination (both large scale and small scale, most of them don't have the

opportunity to go large scale).

Stalin is pretty much an example of an antisocial personality disorder (it was what struck me when I read the book *the Young Stalin* by some English dude), I would consider him mainly LE.

noisms

12-19-2008 10:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Lycanthropes (Weref - Werew

Werefox/Foxwoman

The Foxwomen are another variation on the "alluring female with male slaves" motif - like Dryads, Sylphs, and, er... well, there's a couple more I'm sure. I just can't think of any more than that right now. Foxwomen are less interested in companionship than they are in just having men to pamper them and tell them how beautiful they are, which I think would get boring after a while - God knows having gorgeous women tell me how fantastically handsome I am all day long has started to get *medown*.

Foxwomen can come into a story as kidnappers - they are barren, and so have to steal children, who they then infect with their disease.

Wererat

Wererats occupy a unique position in 2nd edition AD&D, as they are actually the *first monster* which any brand new, fresh player will know about (discounting dragons, I suppose). This is because the example of play at the very beginning of the 2nd edition PHB involves an encounter between Fighter 1, Fighter 2, Cleric and a wererat.

I like the idea of wererats - a parallel society of parasitic criminals living underneath our feet, leeching money, food and whatever else they can get their hands on. A more interesting version of a guild of thieves, I suppose.

Wereraven

The wereraven entry is one of those ones that really suffer from being too setting specific. It even refers the reader to the Ravenloft boxed set for further rules, and discusses matters which, as a non-Ravenloft player, I have no clue about - like dark powers and Vistani. These episodes in the MM are really unprofessional, actually - as if they were just cut n' pasted and nobody even bothered to check them.

Weretiger

"For various reasons weretigresses outnumber weretigers five to one", we are told, but we aren't given much clue as to what those reasons are. Perhaps: Female weretigers sound HOT? Anyway, the entry is mostly descriptive and doesn't provide much in the way of plot or adventure hooks, though it does give the impression that weretigers form wandering adventure bands, which might be a fun alternative campaign.

Werewolf

And last of all are the guys who started to whole crazy lycanthrope thing. They also have one of the best pictures, not just for the therianthropes but for the MM in general. It's a great piece.

I'd forgotten that werewolves have different hybrid forms - some the traditional bipedal wolf, others mixtures of human and wolf features, and others looking like large, bearlike wolves. Another thing I'd forgotten is this line: "Many werewolf families roam the countryside in wagons, much like gypsies. In fact, this has caused many gypsies to be accused of being werewolves." I've never used a gypsy werewolf family in a campaign before, but you can bet I'm going to in the near future.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9740152)
Werebear

Werebears are the first of the Good lycanthropes (therianthr.... etc.), which seems like a bit of a crock to me. Where's the fun in a Good lycanthrope (ursidanthrope?)? That said, I like the concept of a Werebear - a sort of sage (a proper one that is, as opposed to the Monstrous Manual style sages conjecturing about the sexual habits of bugbears or what have you) who lives in the woods, gathering magical artifacts and ancient scrolls and suchlike, then indulging in a bit of light cannibalism.

As everyone else has said, "Beorn." But I think Beorn more classically fits the AD&D druid than the werebear. And when White Wolf put out their splat book for werebears, they were all sagey and healing people and stuff instead of transforming into twelve foot tall bear-men and ripping people's heads off. I don't think WW was stealing from Tolkein, so maybe the "good werebear" comes from some other sources.

Quote:

Wereboar

For some reason Wereboars were always my favourite of the Man-Animals. I'm not sure why, because reading over the entry now, nothing stands out as being very interesting or noteworthy. I suppose they would be best making an appearance as a misunderstood "monster" who are being unfairly targeted by local villagers; the PCs could be originally hired to kill them but come to see it from their point of view. Then again that has 'railroad' written all over it.

Kenzer's Kingdoms of Kalamar setting has an evil god of lust and vice whose symbol is a boar, so his evil priests tend to be wereboars and the like. I thought that was cool. And really creepy.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9748739)

Werewolf

I'd forgotten that werewolves have different hybrid forms - some the traditional bipedal wolf, others mixtures of human and wolf features, and others looking like large, bearlike wolves.

The line "large, bearlike wolves" always made me think of *An American Werewolf in London*. And then that makes me think of Jenny Agutter...

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9748739)

Foxwomen can come into a story as kidnappers - they are barren, and so have to steal children, who they then infect with their disease.

I always though the foxwomen were kind of meh. They seem to be partially modeled on the shapeshifting foxes of Chinese and Japanese folklore, but more one-dimensional...

Quote:

Wererat

Wererats occupy a unique position in 2nd edition AD&D, as they are actually the *first monster* which any brand new, fresh player will know about (discounting dragons, I suppose). This is because the example of play at the very beginning of the 2nd edition PHB involves an encounter between Fighter 1, Fighter 2, Cleric and a wererat.

Yah. Looking at that example, it's noticeable how the characters have no names. I wonder if this is indicative of some major mentality changes between 2e and 3e... or maybe not.

Quote:

I like the idea of wererats - a parallel society of parasitic criminals living underneath our feet, leeching money, food and whatever else they can get their hands on. A more interesting version of a guild of thieves, I suppose.

They're also underutilized, I think - probably because they're the weakest lycanthropes. You could pull off all sorts of Skaven-styled nastiness with them, though, including the ninja rats fighting against sagacious werebears. ;)

Quote:

"For various reasons weretigresses outnumber weretigers five to one", we are told, but we aren't given much clue as to what those reasons are. Perhaps: Female weretigers sound HOT?

The DiTerlizzi illustration does support that theory. Rowr! :)

Quote:

And last of all are the guys who started to whole crazy lycanthrope thing. They also have one of the best pictures, not just for the therianthropes but for the MM in general. It's a great piece.

Indeed.

Quote:

Another thing I'd forgotten is this line: "Many werewolf families roam the countryside in wagons, much like gypsies. In fact, this has caused many gypsies to be accused of being werewolves." I've never used a gypsy werewolf family in a campaign before, but you can bet I'm going to in the near future.

That was a neat plot hook, I always thought. Also, the comments on how werewolves are loving parents and loyal mates, and how it contrasts with their generally bloodthirsty nature, were interesting. Maybe a gypsy woman approaches adventurers, telling them a sad story about her children having been robbed by cruel enemies, and asking for their help.

Then, when the adventurers find the kidnappers they find out that the kids are actually werewolf pups, and the "kidnappers" are embroiled in one of those perennial "what to do with orc children?" dilemmas. (For added bonus, have the mom follow the adventurers, perhaps with several other family members in tow...)

Sleeper

12-20-2008 12:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9749156)

Yah. Looking at that example, it's noticeable how the characters have no names. I wonder if this is indicative of some major mentality changes between 2e and 3e... or maybe not.

Probably, a little. Though naming example characters is nothing new; Basic D&D had Morgan Ironwolf and Black Dougal.

Behemoth

12-20-2008 12:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Black Dougal sounds like a cross between Shaft and the Magic Roundabout.

Oh, and I think the Were bears thing is a celtic (Welsh, i believe) archetype. I remember reading some myth about a wiseman type guy who could turn into a bear, one of the Hero's mentor type characters.

demiurge1138

12-20-2008 01:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9749156)
The DiTerlizzi illustration does support that theory. Rowr! :)

Yeah, hot weretiger women seem to be a trend in D&D illustrations. And the DiTerlizzi illustration made me think... interesting things... when I was a wee one.

Sleeper

12-20-2008 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Behemoth (Post 9749324)
Black Dougal sounds like a cross between Shaft and the Magic Roundabout.

Thieves were so much cooler when Isaac Hayes sung their theme song.

Lidda probably just listens to Cypress Hill.

JRM

12-20-2008 02:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Behemoth (Post 9749324)
Black Dougal sounds like a cross between Shaft and the Magic Roundabout.

Oh, and I think the Were bears thing is a celtic (Welsh, i believe) archetype. I remember reading some myth about a wiseman type guy who could turn into a bear, one of the Hero's mentor type characters.

Late to the party again.

Anyhows, I do remember reading a Celtic legend about a noble warrior (whose name temporarily escapes me) who turned into a bear to devastate his liege lord's enemies. There are similar Celtic legends about Knights who turn into wolves. Plus of course there are Norse and Germanic legends of bear- and wolf shapechangers, though these are typically malevolent entities.

Furthermore, the folklore in some regions of Siberia considers "Brother Bear" a noble creature, and some important men were said to turn into bears (or maybe vica versa) and wander about the forest - I remember reading about a shaman who claimed to have met a bear who he claimed was a Russian communist party leader!

JasonK

12-20-2008 02:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Behemoth (Post 9749324)

Oh, and I think the Were bears thing is a celtic (Welsh, i believe) archetype. I remember reading some myth about a wiseman type guy who could turn into a bear, one of the Hero's mentor type characters.

Welsh, most like - Lloyd Alexander wrote about a very bear-like protector of animals in the Chronicles of Prydain. Dude didn't actually shape-shift as far as I've seen, but the connection's strongly implied.

It's been too long since I read the Welsh myths to tell you who Alexander was aping, though.

~ jasön

JRM

12-20-2008 02:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9741717)

Lesser seawolves can be hit by normal weapons. Did they drop the greater from the MM?

No, the 2nd edition MM still has greater seawolves who are immune to normal weapons. I tend to think of it as being a Master Vampire / Minion Vampire sort of deal, with a "true" greater seawolf infecting a bunch of pirates to turn them into his/her servants.

Hold on, is the dotd.com's **seawolf entry** correct? It lists the lesser seawolf's movement as "Swim 12, 30". Surely they got that the wrong way around, unless a wolf-seal-man can really flop around on its flippers faster than a race horse when on land, but only swim as quickly as a man can run! Must be a typo, but is it in the MM as well?

Anyhow, there must be a story behind the seawolves instinctive urge to destroy shipping and kill or infect sailors. A curse by an evil aquatic race or their deity trying to rid the seas of human intruders? Certainly, they are no friend of the gallant Sea Caballeros!

Vultur10

12-20-2008 02:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Bodvarr Bjarki had a bear's spirit form, which he sent forth to fight while he slept. People woke him up to fight, which was a bad idea: he was not as powerful as the spirit bear.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9741222)

On the other hand, I've always found wereboars the most boar-ing werebeasts... the non-evil roles are IMO better filled by either werebears or weretigers. I did use a wereboar to make a Ryoga Hibiki (from Ranma) cameo once, though: a stubborn, wandering wereboar with a thick skull and a grudge on the PCs based on them foiling his romantic plans. (True to the form, the players had no idea what he was talking about!)

Nah, I like wereboars they've got that "could be friend or foe" thing working for them, and offer a range of roleplaying options - the greedy self-obsessed slob, lusting for food & woman, à la Pigsy in Journey to the West ... the brutal mercenaries who *may* be won over with bribes and threats ... the confused swineherd who's terrified by the unwholesome feelings he's been having about the sows in his charge ever since that "wild boar" bit him in the woods, et cetera.

However, the lycanthrope I've used the most is the wererat. I've had three story-arcs involving thieves guilds which were really made up of shapeshifting rats, in one of which they were having a secret war with a heroic band of werecats* led by a weretiger.

*A homebrew monster which had a weapon-using hybrid form, so I could have a dual sword wielding black cat ninja wreaking havoc amongst the "goblin-rats".

demiurge1138

12-20-2008 03:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

One thing about foxwomen that I think is cool (and hasn't been mentioned) is that the humanoid form changes appearance too. Human and half-elven women infected by the bite of a foxwoman slowly turn into elven versions of themselves. That's cool, and kinda creepy. Why are foxwomen elves? Is it some form of elven curse?

Kakita Kojiro

12-20-2008 04:48 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Behemoth (Post 9749324)

Oh, and I think the Were bears thing is a celtic (Welsh, i believe) archetype. I remember reading some myth about a wiseman type guy who could turn into a bear, one of the Hero's mentor type characters.

Doesn't ring a bell for me, either. There are any number of Welsh and Celtic heroes who can change shape -- Gwydion, Taleisin, Ceridwen, etc. -- but none I can recall that were specifically bears. Ceridwen might've gone bear to catch Gwion in salmon form (tho wiki says: otter).

Actually, the only Celtic hero with a bear motif I can think of is (King) Arthur. IIRC there is a Gaulic bear goddess of similar name (googles; Artio).

I also suspect the later, White Wolf, association with werebears to healer-types is something from Native American folklore.

Sleeper

12-20-2008 06:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Might be Norse-derived, at least the fierce warrior who transforms part. Isn't "berserker" is sometimes translated as "bear-skin" instead of "bare-shirt"?

Vultur10

12-20-2008 08:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Other were-bear like creatures from legends: the Iroquois legend of Nyagwahe, a monstrous bear (twice as tall as a moose!) which could take human shape. It was a man-eater, though.

There is a Cherokee myth that all bears originated from transformed humans...

Wakshaani

12-20-2008 08:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Wererats I rarely used, since, well, Thieve's Guilds take care of most of THAT work, but, I *did* have a band of Goblins that were lead by a Goblin Were-Rat, who used Giant Rats and Rat Swarms and soon, rather than Worgs.

OMG, Goblin Rogue + Wererat Dex = GAH!

That poor party. :(

Lukas Sjöström

12-20-2008 05:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9750768)

Might be Norse-derived, at least the fierce warrior who transforms part. Isn't "berserker" is sometimes translated as "bear-skin" instead of "bare-shirt"?

There are examples of werebears in Norse and Saami myth, but they don't shed any light on the LG thing. Berserkers would certainly be more CN/CE.

The Last Conformist

12-20-2008 06:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9750768)

Might be Norse-derived, at least the fierce warrior who transforms part. Isn't "berserker" is sometimes translated as "bear-skin" instead of "bare-shirt"?

"Bear-shirt" is the preferred translation of the few reference works nearest at hand.

JRM

12-20-2008 06:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9750987)

*Wererats I rarely used, since, well, Thieve's Guilds take care of most of THAT work, but, I *did* have a band of Goblin that were lead by a Goblin Were-Rat, who used Giant Rats and Rat Swarms and soon, rather than Worgs.*

Yes, it's just I feel a wererat thieves guild can do it better. They can do anything normal thieves can, plus additional powers - spying and infiltrating as rats, fighting in mundane-weapon immune hybrid form. A low-level guild of regular thieves would have little chance of competing against them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9750987)

OMG, Goblin Rogue + Wererat Dex = GAH!

That poor party. :(

Unfortunately, I ran that adventure before 3rd edition came out, so they weren't up against Dex 19+ lycanthropic Rogues. I'll have to get them next time!:D

SuperG

12-20-2008 07:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 9740494)

Unsurprisingly, the werebear is straight out of Tolkien (oh lord, that sounds like the name of a bad rap filk, "straight

outta Tolkien, a crazy motherf*cker name Gimli!")

Anyway, I always felt that, although it worked for Beorn, the idea of a good werecreature doesn't work in general. Mythically, lycanthropy is supposed to be a horrifying curse: literally robbing you of your humanity once a month and causing (or allowing) you to do bestial things that damn your soul for eternity. Somehow it lacks mystery and poetry to be doomed, on each full moon, to go out onto the moors and eat berries and do good deeds.

Nah, it's awesome. Imagine a Dark Lord cursed to become a Werebear - each night of the full moon, he must lock himself in his chambers to conceal his shame, and regret the harm to his plans he himself will cause...

Perhaps he is even tormented by his bouts of conscience.

Or you can just have them as, well, miscellaneous good creatures. It's useful to have them around. (And Beorn was totally Good! Killing goblins is good, and heck, he was a LOT nicer to the Dwarfs than the *Elves* were).

Oberon_Unseelie

12-21-2008 03:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My favorite bit about were-rats? They don't have a bite attack; they use weapons in *all three forms*. So you've got two-foot long giants rats attacking with itty-bitty swords - which I guess they'd have to hold in their teeth.

Sleeper

12-21-2008 03:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Oberon_Unseelie (Post 9753510)

My favorite bit about were-rats? They don't have a bite attack; they use weapons in all three forms. So you've got two-foot long giants rats attacking with itty-bitty swords - which I guess they'd have to hold in their teeth.

Ahhhhh! Avast ye scurvy rats!

JRM

12-21-2008 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Oberon_Unseelie (Post 9753510)

My favorite bit about were-rats? They don't have a bite attack; they use weapons in all three forms. So you've got two-foot long giants rats attacking with itty-bitty swords - which I guess they'd have to hold in their teeth.

Oh that's hilarious, why did I never notice it before. I've always ran them as having a giant or regular rat's bite attack in rat-form (in my campaign wererats can also turn into regular-sized rats as well as giant rats, a much better form for spying).

That ruins the classic "find the wererat hiding in a nest of mundane rats" plot. Even dim PCs would figure out to kill the one with the sword.

Still, I do like the idea, being a big fan of Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar series which features weapon-wielding regular sized sapient rats.

Zartes

12-22-2008 12:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9735253)

Well it's up to a week, so presumably if the trolls took small parts they'd regenerate faster. Maybe they can tear of a few fingers or a hand every couple of hours?

However, the basic premise is likely wrong, since I doubt the troll gains mass when regenerating. If trolls could magically grow flesh from out of thin air (or wherever the matter came from), they likely wouldn't have the ravenous appetites they're credited with. Tear a troll's arm off and destroy it, it probably becomes a skinnier troll, because its total weight is lowered by the mass of the lost limb, then it will want to replace its lost body weight by eating.

Sorry to do a backtrack, but I simply had to share an idea...

Trolls aren't a species. They're a single entity. Somewhere out (or down) there is the Troll Hub, a huge lump of troll flesh. The actual trolls that people fight are wandering food collectors. They kill things, eat them, and the food gets teleported back to the Hub. When they're damaged, new mass gets teleported to the individual troll from the Hub, although acid and fire can interfere with this.

This explains a couple of interesting things: trolls can't kill each other (would you really want your digestive system to attack itself?), and they can die of starvation (without a constant supply of incoming food, the hub cuts off the individual troll, as it's a waste of resources).

JRM

12-22-2008 06:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9755869)

Sorry to do a backtrack, but I simply had to share an idea...

Trolls aren't a species. They're a single entity. Somewhere out (or down) there is the Troll Hub, a huge lump of troll

flesh. The actual trolls that people fight are wandering food collectors. They kill things, eat them, and the food gets teleported back to the Hub. When they're damaged, new mass gets teleported to the individual troll from the Hub, although acid and fire can interfere with this.

This explains a couple of interesting things: trolls can't kill each other (would you really want your digestive system to attack itself?), and they can die of starvation (without a constant supply of incoming food, the hub cuts off the individual troll, as it's a waste of resources).

So they're basically ambulatory *bags of devouring*. Although why would there be only one hub? There could be many troll-hubs which fight with each other, which would also be an explanation for why there are different species of troll (two-headed, ice et cetera).

Also, since AD&D trolls come in male and female, that would mean the troll hub is actually a hermaphrodite, and the trolls are actually flowering organs as well as food-gatherers.

Zartes

12-22-2008 09:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9756915)

So they're basically ambulatory bags of devouring. Although why would there be only one hub? There could be many troll-hubs which fight with each other, which would also be an explanation for why there are different species of troll (two-headed, ice et cetera).

Also, since AD&D trolls come in male and female, that would mean the troll hub is actually a hermaphrodite, and the trolls are actually flowering organs as well as food-gatherers.

Well, I had *one* because that makes it sort of legendary and mythological. But one for each troll sub-species works as well.

Flowering Organ Trolls... I can't get over how weird that is, as a sentence. Although, it gets me thinking - I'm pretty sure there are half-trolls (I mean half-human/half-trolls. Since 3.X, there is, of course, half-troll/half-template critters all over the place). Perhaps they have a connection to the hub as well, albeit a more tenuous one. Which gives me the idea of a hub that gets smart, and realizes it can maximize its gains by breeding its Flowering Organs/Food Collectors with other creatures.

This can result in either kidnapping of fair maidens, or else a sudden spate of exceedingly erudite, high-charisma trolls wandering down to the local village with bouquets of flowers and boxes of chocolates...

Vultur10

12-22-2008 01:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Or the troll might be the female. Considering the difficulties of birthing something as large as a half-troll child might be, I think that is more efficient (fewer deaths in childbirth and more live young).

Zartes

12-22-2008 02:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9758031)

Or the troll might be the female. Considering the difficulties of birthing something as large as a half-troll child might be, I think that is more efficient (fewer deaths in childbirth and more live young).

Ah, yes, good point. Please excuse my patriarchal first thoughts about young maidens :P

Vultur10

12-22-2008 03:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9758061)

Ah, yes, good point. Please excuse my patriarchal first thoughts about young maidens :P

Well, that's the traditional way for it to work. It just makes more biological sense to me the other way. (Of course, that ought to be a contra-indication in itself; nothing in D&D makes biological sense.)

JRM

12-22-2008 03:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9757329)

Flowering Organ Trolls... I can't get over how weird that is, as a sentence. Although, it gets me thinking - I'm pretty sure there are half-trolls (I mean half-human/half-trolls. Since 3.X, there is, of course, half-troll/half-template critter: all over the place). Perhaps they have a connection to the hub as well, albeit a more tenuous one. Which gives me the idea of a hub that gets smart, and realizes it can maximize its gains by breeding its Flowering Organs/Food Collectors with other creatures.

Well AD&D gives precedent for troll cross-breeds, since two-headed trolls and giant trolls are said to be the result of a troll mating with an ettin or a hill giant respectively. Presumably it is the apocryphal Sages who did the saying.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9757329)

This can result in either kidnapping of fair maidens, or else a sudden spate of exceedingly erudite, high-charisma trolls wandering down to the local village with bouquets of flowers and boxes of chocolates...

What do you think *philters of love* are for? If the Great EGG himself recognized the possibility of one resulting in a pixie/storm giant cross, why not a troll/human?:)

JRM

12-22-2008 03:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9758061)

Ah, yes, good point. Please excuse my patriarchal first thoughts about young maidens :P

I've long liked the idea of trolls being matriarchal, with the brutish males being ladyed over (as opposed to lorded) by their more intelligent and aggressive wives and daughters. Of course, that wouldn't fit the troll-hub premis, since the trolls would presumably all be part of one psyche rather than having the society and hierarchy of independent beings.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mammal

The Mammal entries seem to have been written by the usual crew, rather than PETA girl - thank the lord. They are deathly dull, although there are one or two instances of weirdness.

Ape, Carnivorous - Good buddies of hobgoblins; I suspect that your liking for these will directly correlate to your liking for pulp fantasy.

Baboon - "Large herbivorous primates".

Badger - A "vicious little creature".

Banderlog - A Baboon with green skin which throws coconuts (1d4+1 damage, making them more deadly than a dagger) and 'retch fruit'.

Bhaergala - A mysterious 'beast' which drops down on people from above and can turn spells; there is no description of its physical appearance.

Wild Boar - Can fight until reduced to -7hp. (Why not -6 or -8?)

Chattur - A small rodent-like animal which is also known as a "space bandit". That *really* doesn't sound like a high fantasy term.

Cooshee - An elven dog, which unfortunately doesn't have its own language like the elven cats. We all know felines are more intelligent anyway.

Dakon - An intelligent ape which can speak.

Debbi - No, not the one who 'did Dallas', but a cross between a baboon and a hyena with electrical fur.

Goat - Can charge to cause a bit of extra damage. Has no special abilities against Trolls.

Gorilla - "Nonaggressive and shy". Boring!

Hsing-sing - Not a jail near New York, but a kind of oriental meditative simian which goes apeshit (geddit?) for two weeks every year and takes off on a murderous rampage.

Hyena - Taunts its enemies with a cackling howl.

Jackal - A timid scavenger.

Losel - A cross between an orc and a baboon. The designers really like their baboons, don't they? That's the fourth baboon or baboon-like creature in this entry.

Monkey Spider - Not a Spider Monkey? And aren't Spiders Arthropods, not Mammals? Shome mishtake, shorely.

Porcupine - Can't shoot quills, which is a bit rubbish.

Rothe - A kind of subterranean ox which lives on fungi.

Skunk - Causes nausea.

Sleek - A sort of big weasel which can sever arteries with its teeth, causing foes to bleed to death with surprising speed.

Stag, Wild - Big fellows with antlers.

Stench Kow - Lower planar cattle, which smell very bad. As opposed to the normal kind, which smell, er, nice. The plural of Stench Kow is 'Kine'.

Taer - More 'vile primates'.

Tyrg - A tiger-dog crossbreed. Tog, surely. Or Diger?

Warthog - Attacks until it is at -7hp, like the boar.

Weasel - Things wot eat rabbits.

Wolverine - Not Hugh Jackman, but the real thing.

Minimal Mammals - Basically half-sized versions of the ordinary variety, with the stats you would expect.

Giant Mammals - Double-sized versions, again with the stats you would expect.

(un)reason

12-22-2008 11:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9755869)

Sorry to do a backtrack, but I simply had to share an idea...

Trolls aren't a species. They're a single entity. Somewhere out (or down) there is the Troll Hub, a huge lump of troll flesh. The actual trolls that people fight are wandering food collectors. They kill things, eat them, and the food gets teleported back to the Hub. When they're damaged, new mass gets teleported to the individual troll from the Hub, although acid and fire can interfere with this.

This explains a couple of interesting things: trolls can't kill each other (would you really want your digestive system to attack itself?), and they can die of starvation (without a constant supply of incoming food, the hub cuts off the individual troll, as it's a waste of resources).

So how does the tarrasque tie into this? This seems like perfect material for that epic thread.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Mammal

Banderlog - A Baboon with green skin which throws coconuts (1d4+1 damage, making them more deadly than a dagger) and 'retch fruit'.

Bhaergala - A mysterious 'beast' which drops down on people from above and can turn spells; there is no description of its physical appearance.

Cooshee - An elven dog, which unfortunately doesn't have its own language like the elven cats. We all know felines are more intelligent anyway.

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Debbi - No, not the one who 'did Dallas', but a cross between a baboon and a hyena with electrical fur.

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Taer - More 'vile primates'.

Tyrg - A tiger-dog crossbreed. Tog, surely. Or Diger?

Yeah, there's an amazing number of weird creatures hiding in amongst the supposedly normal animals. Many of them got proper write-ups the previous edition. Another victim of their desire to fit in as much as possible. They'd make good alternatives for the usual goblinoids and other low-level foes.

The Last Conformist

12-23-2008 12:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monstrous Manual
Mammals are the most common of the vertebrate.

There's about twice as many species of birds as of mammals, and about trice again as many of ray-finned fish.

Slightly less pedantically, there's no explicit restriction that the "minimal" and "giant" templates only apply to mammals of *this* entry. This opens the prospect of giant humans as distinct from giants, as well as giant giants, minimal giants, minimal giant wolves, etc etc ...

JRM

12-23-2008 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Mammal

The Mammal entries seem to have been written by the usual crew, rather than PETA girl - thank the lord. They are deathly dull, although there are one or two instances of weirdness.

The mammal entries is another set of monsters that really suffer for lack of space. Many of the mammals desperately need more info. If you're familiar with earlier D&D monster books or the real-life animals it's usually not so bad, although some of the 'real life' info is a little bizarre.

I can recognize quite a few monsters from AD&D campaigns - Chatur's are from Spelljammer, Debbi from Al-Qadim, Hsing-Sing from Oriental Adventures et cetera.

By the way, have you looked at the illustration? It shows a carnivorous ape or gorilla who looks like King Kong's little cousin standing behind a warthog and a squirrel. The great ape and the warthog look in scale, but the squirrel is the size of a small dog, not to mention that squirrels are under a different entry - Mammal, small. Maybe it's supposed to be a Chatur?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Ape, Carnivorous - Good buddies of hobgoblins; I suspect that your liking for these will directly correlate to your liking for pulp fantasy.

Well since I have a liking for pulp fantasy naturally I love carnivorous apes - although I remember them as Ape, giant carnivorous. Here's the first casualty of the size cut, since the poor things have lost their rend special attack. How are they going to tear player characters limb from limb without it?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Banderlog - A Baboon with green skin which throws coconuts (1d4+1 damage, making them more deadly than a dagger) and 'retch fruit'.

Banderlogs are actually alien baboon-analogues who've escaped from a menagerie aboard a crashed spaceship. See ***Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*** if you don't believe me. That's where retch fruit and the trees they grow on come from too. I assume the 1d4+1 damage for coconuts includes the banderlog's Strength bonus. If not, my thieves are immediately going to replace their throwing dagger bandoliers with strings of nuts!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Bhaergala - A mysterious 'beast' which drops down on people from above and can turn spells; there is no description of its physical appearance.

A Bhaergala is from Ed Greenwood's Forgotten realms and looks like a cross between a wolf and a tiger. You can see 3rd edition stats for one on Enworld's Creature Catalog [here](#). They also regenerate, speak Common, are expert mimics and ventriloquists, love music and collect musical instruments (and sometimes musicians!). Obviously, they needed a full write-up.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Cooshee - An elven dog, which unfortunately doesn't have its own language like the elven cats. We all know felines are more intelligent anyway.

These first appeared in the supplement to Gygax's *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* and are big, fluffy and cute. The last time my players met some they were a version bred by evil elves - still big, fluffy and cute, but murderous!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Monkey Spider - Not a Spider Monkey? And aren't Spiders Arthropods, not Mammals? Shome mishtake, shorely.

More like shome really bad pun on spider monkeys. I can't help imagining some villain exploiting their ability to *automatically bite an opponent on the eye*. E.g. Black Pete the werebat empties a sack of Monkey Spiders over his foes and slits a couple of throats while they're all clutching their faces crying "My Eyes! My Eyes!!"

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9759008)

Sleek - A sort of big weasel which can sever arteries with its teeth, causing foes to bleed to death with surprising speed.

I found this really confusing because the description* led me to imagine an ermine, i.e. a ten inch long white furred stoat, with AC 3, Mv 36", HD 2+1, Attacks 1-4/1-4/2-12 and special abilities of surprise and ripping open its foes veins. I'm imagining them as a kind of **Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog** monster. "Ah, look at the cute lil white fluffy thing ... Arrrr! Arrgh! Get it off!! Get It Off!!!!". I fear the original version is less amusing.

***Sleek:** This ermine-like mammal surprises opponents on 1-5 on 1d6. On an attack roll of 19 or 20, the sleek opens a major vein, causing 2d6 points of damage. Every round thereafter, the victim suffers 1d6 more points damage until the wound is wrapped with a tourniquet, direct pressure, or magical healing.

Multi-Pass

12-23-2008 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9759370)

Slightly less pedantically, there's no explicit restriction that the "minimal" and "giant" templates only apply to mammals of this entry. This opens the prospect of giant humans as distinct from giants, as well as giant giants, minimal giants, minimal giant wolves, etc etc ...

"By the thundering thrones of my ancestors, how many times must I explain this? I'm not a human. I'm a *minimal storm giant*. Get it right!"

JRM

12-23-2008 01:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Multi-Pass (Post 9759548)

"By the thundering thrones of my ancestors, how many times must I explain this? I'm not a human. I'm a minimal storm giant. Get it right!"

Pull the other one son, a minimal Storm giant would still be thirteen feet tall (half a Storm Giant's 26'), not easy to mistake for a human. A minimal Ogre though, they'd look a lot like a brutish human.

(That's for 2nd edition AD&D of course, the giants were smaller in 1st edition so a minimal Storm Giant *might* just be small enough to look like a really really big human following the original MM1 & 2.)

Sleeper

12-23-2008 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Chattur - A small rodent-like animal which is also known as a "space bandit". That *really* doesn't sound like a high fantasy term.

Obvious reference to the movie *Office Space* and the satire of the "rat race". Which is conclusive proof that the author was a time traveler.

Quote:

Porcupine - Can't shoot quills, which is a bit rubbish.

Beware it's more aggressive cousin, the chain gatling-gun porcupine with armor-piercing adamantine-tipped quills.

Quote:

Stench Kow - Lower planar cattle, which smell very bad. As opposed to the normal kind, which smell, er, nice. The plural of Stench Kow is 'Kine'.

. Which is also the plural of the regular version. Though the picture in the original MM2 looked more like a bison than a cow.

Vultur10

12-23-2008 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Taer are from Dragonlance. They were in the Dragonlance Bestiary, with the Yeti as a cold-environment subspecies.

"Kine" is indeed a (fairly archaic/poetic, or at least obscure) word for "cows", which has the advantage of not implying female gender.

Banderlogs - cool. I need to hunt up a copy of Barrier Peaks. I don't suppose it's online anywhere?

Weasels! They left out the part about weasels being the deadly foes of basilisks!

Wakshaani

12-23-2008 07:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Also, note that Goat is in teh Mammal section, which includes Giant mammals, so, you CAN, in fact, stat out your Stone Giant's Giant Goat.

They were thinkin'!

Zartes

12-23-2008 09:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9759135)
So how does the tarrasque tie into this? This seems like perfect material for that epic thread.

perhaps the Tarrasque *is* the Hub? Perhaps a Tarrasque is what you get if you destroy all the trolls belonging to a given Hub, and it has to go looking for food on its own (cue the creation of the "Society from the Preservation of Trolls")

Sleeper

12-23-2008 09:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9760329)

Taer are from Dragonlance. They were in the Dragonlance Bestiary, with the Yeti as a cold-environment subspecies.

They may have been *in* Dragonlance, but I don't think they were *from* Dragonlance. They date back at least to the original MM2 (1983).

Quote:

Banderlogs - cool. I need to hunt up a copy of Barrier Peaks. I don't suppose it's online anywhere?

\$4.95 at OBS

Zartes

12-23-2008 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9760329)

Taer are from Dragonlance. They were in the Dragonlance Bestiary, with the Yeti as a cold-environment subspecies.

in 3.X they can be found (as a PC race, no less) in the more north-easterly portions of Forgotten Realms. Only example I've found of a *medium*-sized critter of the *giant* type.

sim_james

12-23-2008 03:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9761959)

Only example I've found of a medium-sized critter of the giant type.

Dragonlance had a couple too, IIRC. Irda aren't exactly ginormous.

Anybody got the stats for a minimal giant space hamster?

noisms

12-25-2008 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mammal, Herd

This entry contains rules for camels, cattle, buffalo, antelopes and sheep. Pedants will be aware that the picture actually depicts a bison, not a buffalo, but hey, what's a little nitpicking between friends? The entry is about as interesting as it sounds, but it does at least contain rules for stampeding and spit attacks, and also points out that animal droppings can be used to make fire. Bonus points for anybody who's seen that used in a game.

Mammal, Small

The Small Mammals are definitely the least interesting MM entry, because the designers didn't even bother throwing in mythical versions like they did in the 'proper' Mammals section - except for something called a 'Giant Black Squirrel' which lives in 'evil dominated forests' and steals shiny items.

I'm hard pressed to find anything else to comment on for the Mammals. Proper monster entries will resume after Christmas..

Kakita Kojiro

12-25-2008 01:37 AM

I actually used the Giant Black Squirrels, in a Dragonlance after-the-war campaign. They infested the Forest of Wayreth and became the nemeses of the kender (who had the most shiny items to steal, obviously). The other players judged them "annoying, but not as annoying as kender".

... I shoulda given 'em a spit attack, though. Missed opportunity. tsk.

Sleeper

12-25-2008 01:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9767545)

Pedants will be aware that the picture actually depicts a bison, not a buffalo, but hey, what's a little nitpicking between friends?

Actually, I don't have a problem with that. "Buffalo" is a colloquial name for the American bison, which is perfectly valid in general usage. When discussing the phylogenetic grouping, might as well use the precise terminology that the ICZN hammered out, which does a very good job of removing any ambiguity: Call American "buffalo" *Bison bison* and the rest of the "buffalos" *Bubalus*. The mountain lion isn't a lion either, but the name's still at least as common as "cougar" or "puma".

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9767545)

The Small Mammals are definitely the least interesting MM entry, because the designers didn't even bother throwing in mythical versions like they did in the 'proper' Mammals section - except for something called a 'Giant Black Squirrel' which lives in 'evil dominated forests' and steals shiny items.

Sounds like a perfect opportunity for a splatbook, featuring razor squirrels that scramble up humanoids as easily as trees and then rip out their throats, hypershrews that attack in a berserk fury until their hearts explode, corrupted (i.e. half-cobra) mongeese, and, of course, pika-, pika-, Pikachu! (the half-lightning elemental gerbil).

demiurge1138

12-25-2008 02:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9767664)

Sounds like a perfect opportunity for a splatbook, featuring razor squirrels that scramble up humanoids as easily as trees and then rip out their throats, hypershrews that attack in a berserk fury until their hearts explode, corrupted (i.e. half-cobra) mongeese, and, of course, pika-, pika-, Pikachu! (the half-lightning elemental gerbil).

Why do you think 3e introduced the shocker lizard? Not nearly as cute as a Pikachu, but same idea.

Oh, and I'm currently playing a druid with a bison animal companion. He's surprisingly deadly.

Sleeper

12-25-2008 04:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9767716)

Why do you think 3e introduced the shocker lizard? Not nearly as cute as a Pikachu, but same idea.

Now you're tempting me to stat up a 3E paragon animal of legend shocker lizard with some kind of demonic template and call it Pikazuzu, the Demon Lord of Gerbils (and AEDs).

JRM

12-25-2008 04:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9767545)

Mammal, Herd

This entry contains rules for camels, cattle, buffalo, antelopes and sheep. Pedants will be aware that the picture

actually depicts a bison, not a buffalo, but hey, what's a little nitpicking between friends? The entry is about as interesting as it sounds, but it does at least contain rules for stampeding and spit attacks, and also points out that animal droppings can be used to make fire. Bonus points for anybody who's seen that used in a game.

Now I wonder why they make cattle and buffalo Semi-intelligent (2-4) when most mammals are Animal-intelligent (1)? I can understand AD&D making bears, elephants and wolves Semi-intelligent, they're pretty smart animals, but **cows**? They're hardly the sharpest tools in the box.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9767545)

Mammal, Small

The Small Mammals are definitely the least interesting MM entry, because the designers didn't even bother throwing in mythical versions like they did in the 'proper' Mammals section - except for something called a 'Giant Black Squirrel' which lives in 'evil dominated forests' and steals shiny items.

You omitted the only details that would be of interest to some players *how much they're worth*. Hmm, a woodchuck pelt's worth one gold piece, I must remember that. Never mind how much wood it can chuck, let's skin the varmint! Giant otter pelt's are worth 1000-4000, that's pretty good, although they're pretty tough - 5 HD and 3-18 damage bite, they must have *really* sharp teeth.

demiurge1138

12-25-2008 06:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9768125)

Now you're tempting me to stat up a 3E paragon animal of legend shocker lizard with some kind of demonic template and call it Pikazuzu, the Demon Lord of Gerbils (and AEDs).

When I was a wee nipper, I wrote up a netbook full of 3.0 monsters, spells and magic items. One of them was Pikachu as a tanar'ri demon (demons are immune to electricity, after all). Much later, in my epic level game, the demon-worshipping barbarian was bound to a Pika-demon, because it amused Demogorgon immensely.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9768132)

Giant otter pelt's are worth 1000-4000, that's pretty good, although they're pretty tough - 5 HD and 3-18 damage bite, they must have really sharp teeth.

I wouldn't want to fight a giant otter. They'd probably grab you, lay your head on their fluffy bellies, then crack open your skull with a rock. And look adorable doing it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9768356)

I wouldn't want to fight a giant otter. They'd probably grab you, lay your head on their fluffy bellies, then crack open your skull with a rock. And look adorable doing it.

I never thought that [giant otters](#) were as cute as sea otters, but they're still rather cute really. And while they don't crack open shells with rocks, they *do* hunt in packs, and well enough that they're often called "river wolves".

Mind you, I'm not really convinced that D&D "giant otters" are actually supposed to be, you know, *giant otters* as opposed to one of the other otters with a "giant" template applied. Or maybe you take the giant otter and apply a "minimal" template to get one of the other otters?

JRM

12-26-2008 02:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9768863)

I never thought that giant otters were as cute as sea otters, but they're still rather cute really. And while they don't crack open shells with rocks, they do hunt in packs, and well enough that they're often called "river wolves".

Mind you, I'm not really convinced that D&D "giant otters" are actually supposed to be, you know, giant otters as opposed to one of the other otters with a "giant" template applied. Or maybe you take the giant otter and apply a "minimal" template to get one of the other otters?

Well the giant otter stats don't necessarily match up with a regular otter with the giant mammal template. The 2nd ed MM gives the various otters these stats:

Otter HD 1-1; AC 5; #Enc 1-4; Atks 1@1-2; Mv 12/Sw18; XP 7

Otter (sea) HD 1+1; AC 5; #Enc 1-4; Atks 1@1-3; Mv 12/Sw18; XP 35

Otter (giant) HD 5; AC 5; #Enc 2-5; Atks 1@3-18; Mv 9/Sw18; XP 175

While the Giant Mammal template says:

Giant Mammals: Giant mammals are double-sized breeds of otherwise normal animals. They have the same physical and behavioral traits of their full-sized relatives. These giants generally have double the number of Hit Dice, a corresponding rise in THACO, a -2 AC bonus, and a +2 Morale bonus. The damage caused by the attacks of a giant mammal is twice that of the full-sized relative.

Apply those rules to the above stats and we get:

Giant Otter HD 2-2; AC 3; #Enc 1-4; Atks 1@1-4; Mv 12/Sw18;

Giant Otter (sea) HD 2+2; AC 3; #Enc 1-4; Atks 1@1-6; Mv 12/Sw18;

Giant Otter (giant) HD 10; AC 3; #Enc 2-5; Atks 1@6-36; Mv 9/Sw18;

I don't have a 2nd edition DMG within easy reach to work out the XP.

You can see that a Giant Otter has quite different stats from an Otter (giant), the Otter (giant) has more Hit Dice, although admittedly the Giant Mammal text says it generally has double the hit dice, not always, but it also does greater damage and has an inferior AC.

But then, that's par for the course for giant animals. Its like Dire Animals in 3rd edition, there isn't a consistent rule for converting the one to the other.

Wakboth

12-26-2008 04:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Applied mammalogy and otterism! :D

noisms

12-26-2008 07:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Manscorpion

I sometimes wonder if staunchly old school feminist D&D players get annoyed at creature names like 'manscorpion'? I suppose there aren't actually very many old school feminist role players out there, but I still like to imagine a circa-1970 Germaine Greer-type figure pounding her fist on the table, sending d20s, pencils and character sheets flying, while yelling, "It's *humanscorpion*, dammit!"

Anyway, Manscorpions are pretty cool, in my opinion. They're the classic example of a monster which could play a big role in a campaign setting, if only you could be bothered. In fact, and I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I think they have a real 'original races' vibe to them; they could be the desert-based part of the aarocokra-lizardman-bullywug axis, inhabitants of a debased society still living in the delapidated ruins of their former civilisation. I especially like the idea of an underground city, with chasms like inverted pyramids and pits instead of buildings. That's just crying out to be a secret realm hidden underneath a thought-to-be-abandoned old city in the dunes.

In a spirit of fairness I also have to speak up for the picture, which is very evocative and one of the better non-Diterlizzi pieces.

Wakshaani

12-26-2008 08:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

You didn't give us info, tho, just plot seeds!

Boo, booooooooo...

YojimboC

12-27-2008 06:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9771381)

In fact, and I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I think they have a real 'original races' vibe to them;

Scorpion men feature in the epic of Gilgamesh. They're guarding the gate to the land of darkness or some such. Bas-reliefs show them with big Sheddu-style beards and bows.

Quote:

In a spirit of fairness I also have to speak up for the picture, which is very evocative and one of the better non-Diterlizzi pieces.

Mark Nelson, if I'm not mistaken. Same guy who did the Crabman illo. My favorite MM artist, ever.

6inTruder

12-27-2008 07:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9771381)

Manscorpion Anyway, Manscorpions are pretty cool, in my opinion. They're the classic example of a monster which could play a big role in a campaign setting, if only you could be bothered. In fact, and I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I think they have a real 'original races' vibe to them; they could be the desert-based part of the aarocokra-lizardman-bullywug axis, inhabitants of a debased society still living in the delapidated ruins of their former civilisation. I especially like the idea of an underground city, with chasms like inverted pyramids and pits instead of buildings. That's just crying out to be a secret realm hidden underneath a thought-to-be-abandoned old city in the dunes.

From wikipedia: These were her [Tiamat's] own offspring: giant sea serpent s, storm demons, fish-men, scorpion-men and many others.

Just thought that was a cool reference that'll come up if I ever get my own game running.

Quote:

In a spirit of fairness I also have to speak up for the picture, which is very evocative and one of the better non-Diterlizzi pieces.

And this. Yeah, I'm not too big a fan of that picture. But I also like my hybrids to look more like what they're hybrids of. Which is totally just me!

Ooh! Old school Scorpion-dude! From an old D&D arcade game I think.

The second one is small, but more how I see them.

edit: [One more](#), which is a bit easier on the eyes (if not the best pic. He looks kinda bored honestly).

sim_james

12-27-2008 10:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've even played a scorpionperson (in a fairly free-wheeling Runequest game). The intimidation factor of a stinger should not be underestimated! People fear that thing!

Kakita Kojiro

12-27-2008 10:15 AM

Dude, that's *RuneQuest*. Ducks with spears are fearsome opponents in RuneQuest. Heck, trollkin rather infamously take out Rune Lords with some regularity.

Saying that people feared the *stinger* is a tad misleading. You could've been armed with looseleaf paper and they would've feared the papercut. ;)

Plus, they were probably afraid you'd consume them and turn them into chaos monsters. Gloranthan scorpionmen are *wonderfully* creepy, and like most all Gloranthan beasties, much more fleshed out conceptually than their typical D&D counterpart.

Lee Casebolt

12-27-2008 02:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9772306)

Scorpion men feature in the epic of Gilgamesh. They're guarding the gate to the land of darkness or some such. Bas-reliefs show them with big Shedu-style beards and bows.

And they were totally sweet in the one issue of *Arak: Son of Thunder* I used to own. Which, not coincidentally, recapped the Epic of Gilgamesh.

sim_james

12-27-2008 05:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9772706)

Plus, they were probably afraid you'd consume them and turn them into chaos monsters. Gloranthan scorpionmen are wonderfully creepy, and like most all Gloranthan beasties, much more fleshed out conceptually than their typical D&D counterpart.

I spent a lot of time impressing my cohort with the fact that I was not a chaosmonster apt to explode into meaningless fury and tear shreds of their flesh from their backs just to wrap the skin around my wrists, rub the still-warm fat on my chest, and paint my face with their blood.

For example.

I wouldn't do any of that stuff.

noisms

12-27-2008 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9772373)

edit: One more, which is a bit easier on the eyes (if not the best pic. He looks kinda bored honestly).

He does look kind of lacklustre, but much more scorpion-like. Not sure I'm a fan of the blue skin, though. For some reason I associate blue (and green) tones with spider people. Scorpion people should have more of a red/black/yellow vibe.

6inTruder

12-27-2008 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9773577)

He does look kind of lacklustre, but much more scorpion-like. Not sure I'm a fan of the blue skin, though. For some reason I associate blue (and green) tones with spider people. Scorpion people should have more of a red/black/yellow vibe.

I like how he's conjured up this HUGE storm for some (probably sinister) purpose, but his face just reads like he'd rather be back in his hole reading something.

Also, blue-black is totally a scorpion colour. Like emperor scorpions.

JRM

12-28-2008 12:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9771445)
You didn't give us info, tho, just plot seeds!

Boo, booooooooo...

I agree with the sentiment, but you can just look over [here](#) and read the manscorpion's MM entry.

Hmm... there are some interesting bits and pieces.

Firstly, the picture may not look much like a scorpion, but it's a good match with the description and is pretty creepy-looking. Kudos to the artist!

Quote:

The origins of these creatures is thought to lie in an ancient curse placed on evil humans.

Oh good grief, not another one. What kind of curses are these supposed to be? "We're horrible evil folks, so the gods punish us by making us even tougher and nastier!" Why don't they start blessing good humans to make them handsome, powerful creatures - or is that where Shedu and Lammasu come from? "I appreciate you're gift, Oh Divine One, but wouldn't we be more effective servants of goodness if we had *hands*?"

I like the description of the manscorpion's venom, it gives them a few rounds to do something to help the afflicted, or an opportunity to panic and shout "what do you mean you didn't prepare *Neutralize Poison* today!"

Quote:

Anyone struck by the tail's spur must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or die in 2d4 rounds. Victims suffer weakness for one round (-2 attack penalty), start to shake in the next round (-3 attack penalty and no Dexterity bonus to AC), then convulse (AC 10 and no attacks possible) until they die.

JRM

12-28-2008 12:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9773882)
I like how he's conjured up this HUGE storm for some (probably sinister) purpose, but his face just reads like he'd rather be back in his hole reading something.

Well, in the original myths scorpion men were immortal, giving them endless opportunities to get bored out of their skulls. Maybe he's thinking "Ho-hum, another day another *Control Weather* and *Meteor Storm* to crush a human civilization like ants beneath my claws."

Oh, and thanks 6intruder for that picture of an Akkadian scorpionman carving. Now all my scorpionmen are going to carry bows and arrows poisoned with their own venom, just to be authentic you understand.:D

By the way, you can download that Orc's Head sourcebook from Wizards' website [here](#). Scroll down to the

"Savage Coast Campaign Setting". It includes rules for playing manscorpions in AD&D. Here's the most interesting chunks of relevant text:

Quote:

Manscorpions

Present day Nimmurians are manscorpions who usurped the land from its previous occupants, a race of winged minotaurs (enduks). The current Nimmurians are vicious, ruthless, conniving creatures filled with hatred. Pity and remorse are unknown to them. They crave the sun but they also fear it, for, due to Ixion's curse, the sun incinerates them if they are not protected from it. Ruled by an overking but split into several dominions or city-states, the manscorpions are in constant strife for personal and regional power.

Appearance: Manscorpions have a human torso and a bony-plated, arachnoid body with eight legs. Their spines stretch out to form a long tail with a wicked stinger on the end of it. Their hands have two thick fingers and a long thumb, giving them the appearance of a scorpion's claws. Though bald, they wear elaborate wigs of shoulder-length dark hair and beards (for the males). These are styled into elaborate, curled rows. The wigs are easily kept coiffured and were based upon the styles popular with the enduks.

They used to be relatively dark skinned, with sandy-colored tails and lower bodies, but their long tenure underground and the curse imposed upon them by Ixion has turned them horribly translucent, so that their black hearts, ichor, and internal organs now show through in a repulsive vision of nature gone awry. This is not usually apparent to other races because the Nimmurians cover their bodies with a thick makeup to protect themselves from the lethal effect of the sun. Makeup ranges from brown for the lower castes, to red for warriors, and gold with embellishments for the nobility. Priests usually cover their entire bodies with silver runes over black makeup, without which they couldn't cast spells under the sun. When outside, all manscorpions wear masks featuring monstrous grimaces. The masks provide a visor and dark lenses to protect their fragile eyes.

Clothing (usually thin wool) and armor are designed to be worn over the makeup. Most manscorpions wear elaborate shawls or tunics edged with fringes. Filets to keep their elaborate hair in place are popular for both males and females, as are necklaces, earrings, armbands, and bracelets.

Personality: Manscorpions are greedy, self-serving, and brutal. From the enduks they acquired a veneer of civilization, but the curse that afflicts them made them a paranoid, secretive, and frustrated race. They fear to let others know of their vulnerability to sunlight, though they crave its warmth and illumination. They are warlike and care little for the lives or comfort of others.

Manscorpions are usually neutral and evil in alignment, though some few have a personal code of honor or still worship Idu (Ixion). It is not impossible to find ones such as these who are both lawful and good, it is simply unusual. Though they often appear aloof or reserved, a fierce, angry spirit forms the core of every manscorpion, and competition and aggression burn brightly in each heart. The best of them use these traits to perform great deeds, while the worst give way to their basest instincts.

Lifestyle: To some extent, the manscorpions' lifestyle is dictated by the curse laid upon them by Idu when they drove out the enduks. The Immortal made sunlight excruciatingly painful for them. Normal clothing is insufficient to stop the curse's effects. Only protective makeup and armor can shield them from the deadly rays and the pain. Direct sunlight blinds them unless they wear dark lenses to protect their eyes. Artificial light doesn't affect them.

Because they must constantly shield themselves from the sun, most manscorpions live underground. The cities of the enduks lie atop vast underground networks of manscorpion tunnels, pits, and chasms. Only those manscorpions who have business in the overcities reside there, and even they usually have retreats below ground.

On the surface, manscorpion cities consist of a great many mud brick houses, storehouses, slave quarters, and shops that lie at the feet of a grand palace, a series of monuments (some ruins, some intact), and a great ziggurat that serves as a place of worship. The ziggurat is usually decorated with several colors and has green trees and gardens on some of its levels. Many manscorpions live in these overdwelling, and most visitors assume that the surface

picture of the city is the true one. In fact, the surface city usually only holds a fraction of the manscorpion population of the city. The majority of them live in the vast caverns underneath the structures. These are reached by tunnels and sloping ramps constructed under the houses and shops, the palace and the ziggurat. Visitors are discouraged from enquiring too closely about the interiors of these structures in order to keep the underground section of the city secret.

The manscorpions employ large numbers of slaves for raising food, manufacturing fine oils and perfumes, and tending sheep. Manscorpions are omnivorous. Though they prefer meat when available, they can survive on carrion, if necessary. They are soldiers, artists, traders, administrators, and seekers of ancient knowledge - most particularly of lore regarding the ancient star devices, weapons of potentially great destruction, found in many Nimmurian cities. Though not quite as likely to be in positions of authority, a good number of female manscorpions rule dominions and serve as priests, administrators, or troop commanders.

6inTruder

12-28-2008 12:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Wicked! My tlincallis are going to be Tiamat worshipers, but there's some cool stuff there.

Also, anyone have a better idea how those underground upside-down cities'd look??? I just can't picture them. Like, if they're just upside-down in giant caverns then it just feels kinda silly and lame; but making it all amphitheatre-esque just lacks the grandure of huge ziggurats.

Kakita Kojiro

12-28-2008 01:58 AM

Huh, I'd forgotten their other name, but: anyone know where *tlincalli* came from? Actual Aztec myth, or something pseudo-Aztecy like Ixitchitl?

JRM

12-28-2008 05:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9773975)

Wicked! My tlincallis are going to be Tiamat worshipers, but there's some cool stuff there.

Also, anyone have a better idea how those underground upside-down cities'd look??? I just can't picture them. Like, if they're just upside-down in giant caverns then it just feels kinda silly and lame; but making it all amphitheatre-esque just lacks the grandure of huge ziggurats.

Well the only canon D&D inverted ziggurat I can think of offhand is the one in White Plume Mountain, but I don't think that's what you were aiming at.;

JRM

12-28-2008 05:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9774079)

Huh, I'd forgotten their other name, but: anyone know where tlincalli came from? Actual Aztec myth, or something pseudo-Aztec like Ixitachitl?

I suspect it's from the grand country of "we made something up 'cause it sounded cool".

Hold on, I'll do a quick glance around the internet...

...well then only mention of tlincalli I could find were all D&D references, so it looks like an original name. They can't all be mythic beasts like heucavas.

If you fancy giving them a historical name, Wikipedia says the Akkadians called scorpion men aqrabuamelu or girtablilu, although to me those sound more like made-up monster names than tlincalli does!

Kakita Kojiro

12-28-2008 09:52 AM

Well, girtab-lillû just means "scorpion-man"; girtab-liltû would be "scorpion-woman". IIRC, there were also ku-lillû ("fish-man"), and lion-men too... um... (*googles*), apparently those were urmah-lillû.

But I hadn't known of an Aztec/mesoamerican scorpion-man tradition. And the only Nahuatl glossary I have doesn't have "scorpion" listed. tch.

JRM

12-28-2008 09:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9774929)

*Well, girtab-lillû just means "scorpion-man"; girtab-liltû would be "scorpion-woman". IIRC, there were also ku-lillû ("fish-man"), and lion-men too... um... (*googles*), apparently those were urmah-lillû.*

But I hadn't known of an Aztec/mesoamerican scorpion-man tradition. And the only Nahuatl glossary I have doesn't have "scorpion" listed. tch.

According to this [webpage](#), Scorpion is "Colotl" in Nahuatl.

Since "human" is "Tlacatl" does that mean a "Scorpion Human" is a Colotl-tlacatl or a Tlacatl-colotl?

noisms

12-28-2008 10:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9775783)
*According to this **webpage**, Scorpion is "Colotl" in Nahuatl.*

Since "human" is "Tlacatl" does that mean a "Scorpion Human" is a Colotl-tlacatl or a Tlacatl-colotl?

Where are those Nahuatl speakers when you need them?

There are quite a few living in California I hear. Some of them must be roleplayers.

The Last Conformist

12-29-2008 12:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The -tl at the end of many Nahuatl words is an ending that would presumably not be duplicated in compounding, so perhaps colo-tlacatl or tlaca-colotl.

JRM

12-29-2008 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9776075)
The -tl at the end of many Nahuatl words is an ending that would presumably not be duplicated in compounding, so perhaps colo-tlacatl or tlaca-colotl.

Ta Conformist, I half-suspected the ending would be dropped. I think I prefer the ring of Tlacacolotl better than Colotlcatl. It sounds like a manscorpion could "say" Tlacacolotl just by snapping its chitinous fingers.

Hmm, maybe that's how manscorpions talk? Then if you want to learn how to communicate with one in its own language, you have to be a master of playing the **zill** (aka finger cymbals). Maybe that **tinker gnome with the clicker and clacker** can speak Manscorpion as well as Hook Horror.

Kakita Kojiro

12-29-2008 02:29 AM

Even odder, in the glossary I have and several others googled... "calli-" means "house". "tlin-" doesn't show up in any of 'em.

So it's probably pseudo-nahuatl, since it seems unlikely you'd refer to a monster as a <something>house.

Vultur10

12-29-2008 04:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9776305)

Even odder, in the glossary I have and several others googled... "calli-" means "house". "tlin-" doesn't show up in any of 'em.

So it's probably pseudo-nahuatl, since it seems unlikely you'd refer to a monster as a <something>house.

Unless it means "house-destroyer" or something.

Kakita Kojiro

12-29-2008 06:19 AM

As far as I know, in Nahuatl, the modifier comes first in compound words. (E.g., Nezhuacoyotl - "hungry coyote", Quetzalcouatl - "feathered serpent"). Ergo, <something>house.

Not beyond the realm of possibility -- we use "brick house" to describe something other than a house, occasionally. But unlikely that the Aztecs had the Commodores.

noisms

12-29-2008 08:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Manticore

Manticores always put me in mind of an anti-Santa Claus, which makes them a fitting entry for this time of year. A jolly old fellow with a big white beard, except the beard isn't white, it's grey, and he isn't jolly, he's mean...and he has THE BODY OF A LION AND BIG BAT'S WINGS!!!!

Manticores' best trick is to fire spikes from their tails, which doesn't say a whole lot for the monster when you think about it - especially since the spikes only do 1-6 points of damage and aren't poisonous, which surely they should be. They also can't be ridden, which isn't much fun at all. (There is basically no point in trying to domesticate a Manticore, because adults have an 80% chance of reverting to a wild state. 80%!) Maybe I was spoiled by Warhammer and Fighting Fantasy manticores, which I think could be ridden (though don't quote me on that).

Manticores will cooperate with evil humanoids, though, which means that they can end up with magical bracelets and collars to turn them into proper killing machines. This would be a nice surprise to spring on an overconfident mid-level party of adventurers.

The pelt of a Manticore, with wings, is worth 10,000 gp - not bad work if you can get it.

Wakboth

12-29-2008 09:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Manticore's a kind of underutilized monster; I think it may be in part because the art in 2e MM is pretty weak. I'd really like to see a DiTerlizzi manticore... (Also, I'm one of the people who liked the 3e MM manticore pic, which seems to be almost universally disliked.)

And IIRC, manticores were really ornery critters in Warhammer, as well, and went on murderous rampages if the rider was killed, or if they failed leadership checks, and so on.

JasonK

12-30-2008 12:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9778730)

I'd really like to see a DiTerlizzi manticore... (Also, I'm one of the people who liked the 3e MM manticore pic, which seems to be almost universally disliked.)

Then you have already seen and enjoyed a DiTerlizzi manticore pic. :)

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/MM...MM35_PG180.jpg

And now you've done it again!

~ jasön

demiurge1138

12-30-2008 12:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I'm a big fan of manticores. They make for a good mid-level monster, sniping across the battlefield with their tail spikes, then diving in for a good scrum. And 2e flavor-text be damned. Manticores are there to be ridden by evil humanoids.

Like Patrick Swayze, the goblin. I don't know why he was dubbed Patrick Swayze, but he was damn near unkillable. During a big ol' goblin fight, that little bastard avoided every hit, tripped our giant half-orc barbarian and criticised him twice whilst standing on his chest, passed every Reflex save, escaped when we started just magic missile-ing him by climbing a sixty-foot high wall, jumping onto a manticore's back and riding to freedom.

He later returned, riding a chimera. And we kicked his ass effortlessly. Should have stuck to the manticore.

The Last Conformist

12-30-2008 05:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

ObEtymology: The word "manticore" arose by scribal corruption of Greek *martikhoras*, in turn almost certainly derived from the Old Persian for "man-eater".

demiurge1138

12-30-2008 05:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've heard it said that the manticore comes from garbled tales of tigers reaching Greece. I find this one more unlikely than the connection between griffins and Protoceratops skeletons, or between leucrotta and hyenas. Those tale-tellers must not have been paying very much attention!

The Last Conformist

12-30-2008 06:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9780359)

I've heard it said that the manticore comes from garbled tales of tigers reaching Greece.

Pausanias thought so back in the 2nd century AD:

Quote:

The beast described by Ctesias in his Indian history, which he says is called martichoras by the Indians and "man-eater" by the Greeks, I am inclined to think is the tiger. But that it has three rows of teeth along each jaw and spikes at the tip of its tail with which it defends itself at close quarters, while it hurls them like an archer's arrows at more distant enemies; all this is, I think, a false story that the Indians pass on from one to another owing to their excessive dread of the beast.

Myself, I incline to think the martikhoras corresponds to no real animal at all. I'm generally deeply suspicious of supposed explanations of mysterious events or things that can't be shown to have happened or existed in the first place.

It doesn't get any better when we note that Ctesias probably never visited India himself, and his account is chokeful with absurdities.

YojimboC

12-30-2008 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I always kind of liked the manticore. The three rows of teeth thing is just so weird to think about... that jaw must be huge!

Although it may be unwise to admit this, I read *A Spell for Chameleon* as a young lad, and the cover had a wicked looking manticore on it with a huge scorpion tail.

But the spike flinging thing is deadly. Sure, they only do 1D6 damage, but they can fire up to 6 spikes in a volley. Six dice of damage in the face from 180 yards away is nothing to sneeze at.

Äkräs

12-30-2008 03:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9780359)

I've heard it said that the manticore comes from garbled tales of tigers reaching Greece. I find this one more unlikely than the connection between griffins and Protoceratops skeletons, or between leucrotta and hyenas.

I'm skeptical, too. At the time there was still a strongish population of asiatic lions in the Middle East so there's no really good reason why the tales would get garbled as the lions would give a conceptual reference for big cat predators.

kelvingreen

12-30-2008 06:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9773955)

*By the way, you can download that Orc's Head sourcebook from Wizards' website **here**. Scroll down to the "Savage Coast Campaign Setting". It includes rules for playing manscorpions in AD&D. Here's the most interesting chunks of relevant text:*

I love the bit about the wigs and false beards. Also the "dark lenses to protect their fragile eyes".

"Eeek! A manscorpion!"

"Shhh! I am in disguise!"

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9778609)

Maybe I was spoiled by Warhammer and Fighting Fantasy manticores, which I think could be ridden (though don't quote me on that).

There's nothing in *Out of the Pit* about riding manticores, and they are described as having "a hatred for all life", so I suspect it's unlikely that they could be tamed. That's not to say that a manticore can't be ridden in one of the individual gamebooks, however.

Hellzon

12-30-2008 07:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Someone on the 4E design team agrees with you guys about riding - a 4E mantichore even gets a bonus to it's spike attacks if it has a rider. And it has one of the better illustrations in the 4E MM too.

noisms

12-31-2008 07:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Medusa

We all know what a Medusa is - you've seen *Clash of the Titans*, after all. What, you haven't? Do so at once. The first and most obvious thing to say about them is that they're instakill heaven, possessing not one but two attacks which can put an immediate end to an adventurer's life. The first is the poisonous bites of their snake hair. The second is the famous petrification gaze.

The mirror scene from the myth of Perseus, when the eponymous hero angles a mirror so that he can look at the medusa directly without suffering ill effect, is one of the most famous in Greek legend. Oddly, the D&D version makes no reference to such ingenious uses of reflective surfaces - instead relying on the hoary old "if she looks into a mirror she turns into stone herself!" routine. Isn't that Basilisks? I think the D&D version of the medusa is notably diminished in the terror factor by this twisting of the myth; it can be defeated or neutralised far too easily for my tastes.

I also find it unusual that Medusa should be Lawful Evil in alignment. They seem classically Chaotic Evil to me - being unpredictable, solitary, malicious and hateful. Maybe I'm missing something.

That said, the Medusa is probably one of my favourite mythical monsters. There's something deeply and intrinsically frightening in the story, and even the D&D-isation of the monster can't quite diminish it entirely. I hope to foist one on my players in my next campaign.

Wakshaani

12-31-2008 10:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mmmmmm, Medusa.

Such a fantastic critter, but one that's such a trope that it's both used poorly and has a terrible reputation. Anytime, anywhere, you mention "Amazingly lifelike statues," every player at the table goes, "Aw crap. Medusa. Alright boys, break out the mirrors..." The statue bit's always a dead giveaway, but, it's also been used in the past.... has anyone *not* had a Medusa working through a 'sculptor' scam artist, selling 'statues' to the wealthy? I mean really.

Of course, of equal overuse has to be the "Beautiful princess in captivity", clad in a shroud and pulling against walled manacles (But partially in shadow) that, once the heroes get near ... BAM! Medusa. (Of course, she's still chained to a wall, so, that just doesn't really end well, now does it?)

Now, once you take the Medusa and blow it up into a creature with an ecology and a lifestyle and so forth, things get interesting. How do they interact with human, or humanoid, society? Are they naturally evil? What do they eat? The original Medusa, the lone mortal of the three Gorgons, was a dynamite archer... is there a culture to the bow, or was she a special case? Are there male medusa? Do they mate with human(oid)s? Do they just lay eggs which hatch into more of their kind or are they just created by divine curse?

These things are *rich* in use.

6inTruder

12-31-2008 11:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Male medusa?! I don't think even D&D got THAT crazy!

;)

I like to think that a veiled medusa could act at least semi-openly in a forgiving enough community. Like beholders and illithids in Spelljammer. And the master archer thing is really cool (and suitably yonked!).

Now that all said... What about that picture?! Easily one of my favourites in the book, though I'd not've minded a bit of tuskyness. But maybe I'm just kinky that way? AND the Clash medusa was a D&D Greater Medusa, which had the serpentine lower torso vs normal lady-type legs.

JRM

12-31-2008 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9778609)

Manticore

Manticores always put me in mind of an anti-Santa Claus, which makes them a fitting entry for this time of year. A jolly old fellow with a big white beard, except the beard isn't white, it's grey, and he isn't jolly, he's mean...and he ha: THE BODY OF A LION AND BIG BAT'S WINGS!!!!

Manticores' best trick is to fire spikes from their tails, which doesn't say a whole lot for the monster when you think about it - especially since the spikes only do 1-6 points of damage and aren't poisonous, which surely they should be. They also can't be ridden, which isn't much fun at all. (There is basically no point in trying to domesticate a Manticore, because adults have an 80% chance of reverting to a wild state. 80%!) Maybe I was spoiled by Warhammer and Fighting Fantasy manticores, which I think could be ridden (though don't quote me on that).

Oh blast it to blasty, I've missed one of my favourite monsters.

Anyhow, traditionally manticores don't have wings, and I've long wondered why they do in D&D. Maybe there are a few pre-D&D stories or pictures of winged manticores, or Gygax just liked the idea.

I've also wonder about the mythological explanation for manticores. There's a fabulous beast called an Ant-Lion, which has the front half of lion and the back half of an ant, which according to legend is born after a lion "spills its seed" on an ant's nest. Maybe a manticore is the result of a lion doing the same to a female scorpion?

The oldest version of the manticore I'm aware of is in Pliny, and they're quite different from the D&D version. IIRC (being too lazy to look up the precise details) they have red fur and scorpion-type stings at the end of their tails, live in jungles and have voices like brass trumpets. They also occasionally hunt in groups (prides?) and have a peculiar talent for mimicry and ventriloquism - so you may hear someone calling out to you from one bush, only for a manticore to pounce out from another. They don't have the wings or the spike-hurling, alas.

Another version of the beast I'm fond of is the one in The Worm Ourobouros by E R Eddison. These where mountain-dwellers who loathed their own kind with a passion, so if you bathed in the blood of a manticore, any others would not attack you, being revulsed by the scent. These had scorpion-tails as well, but also had

porcupine spines bristling from their hindquarters. The book doesn't say they can shoot these spines out at foes, but I don't see why they shouldn't in my world. Oh, and these mountain manticores don't have wings either.

JRM

01-01-2009 12:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9787362)
Mmmmmm, Medusa.

*Such a fantastic critter, but one that's such a trope that it's both used poorly and has a terrible reputation. Anytime, anywhere, you mention "Amazingly lifelike statues," every player at the table goes, "Aw crap. Medusa. Alright boys, break out the mirrors..." The statue bit's always a dead giveaway, but, it's also been used in the past.... has anyone *not* had a Medusa working through a 'sculpter' scam artist, selling 'statues' to the wealthy? I mean really.*

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Now, once you take the Medusa and blow it up into a creature with an ecology and a lifestyle and so forth, things get interesting. How do they interact with human, or humanoid, society? Are they naturally evil? What do they eat? The original Medusa, the lone mortal of the three Gorgons, was a dynamite archer... is there a culture to the bow, or was she a special case? Are there male medusa? Do they mate with human(oid)s? Do they just lay eggs which hatch into more of their kind or are they just created by divine curse?

*These things are *rich* in use.*

Oh dear, so much to quibble about in this post.

The original medusa was not an archer, there's nothing in the **classical myths** about her or her immortal sisters using bows, or any other artificial weapon. I am very fond of Mr Harryhausen's interpretation of Medusa, but it does differ in many respects from the original.

(EDIT: Nor did their arrows end in sticks of high-explosive, although I won't promise that the next medusa my players meet won't be such a "dynamite archer" ;))

Oh, speaking of differences, the original gorgons all had wings and were swift fliers. Why does that rarely feature in roleplaying game versions of the monster? They don't have snakey lower bodies in the myths either, like Harryhausen's version or AD&D's greater medusa. Nor did their tails have rattles on the end, rattlesnakes being unavailable in ancient Greece.

As for male medusa, these do exist in D&D and are called **Maedar**. A male medusa doesn't have venomous snake-hair. They are immune to petrification and can turn stone to flesh, so make ideal mates for a medusa, since they make her petrified victims a permanently preserved larder.

The **AD&D version of the medusa** does lay eggs, by the way. One thing I like about the right-up is that a medusa's severed head keeps its petrifying power for days after its death, an obvious homage to the myth.

Wakshaani

01-01-2009 01:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9787469)
Male medusa?! I don't think even D&D got THAT crazy!

In point of fact, the old Dragon Magazine Ecology of teh Medusa introducer the ... I want to say Madaer, the Male Medusa. His big schtick was that his touch could turn STONE into FLESH. This was explained as how the Medusa actually ate. It'd freeze something, they'd bash it into shards with ahammer, then the Madaer would turn the bits into flesh to cook and eat.

It also used a spell ability to merge with stone, and just hid in walls most of teh time, which is why nobody ever saw 'em.

noisms

01-01-2009 02:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9787931)
In point of fact, the old Dragon Magazine Ecology of teh Medusa introducer the ... I want to say Madaer, the Male Medusa. His big schtick was that his touch could turn STONE into FLESH. This was explained as how the Medusa actually ate. It'd freeze something, they'd bash it into shards with ahammer, then the Madaer would turn the bits into flesh to cook and eat.

It also used a spell ability to merge with stone, and just hid in walls most of teh time, which is why nobody ever saw 'em.

It's the very next entry. ;)

Hellzon

01-01-2009 02:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

'kay, you're making me do this. 4E has male medusae, who either fight with longswords or poison people with their gaze. And they don't have snaky hair. Females remain as bow(wo)men with a petrifying gaze.

Of course, I'm pretty sure male medusae are coming up next in this thread. EDIT: Too slow.

kelvingreen

01-01-2009 03:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9787469)
Male medusa?! I don't think even D&D got THAT crazy!

The very next page, I believe, complete with body tattoos and a fetching bathtowel accessory. ;)

demiurge1138

01-01-2009 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9787469)

Now that all said... What about that picture?! Easily one of my favourites in the book, though I'd not've minded a bit of tuskyness. But maybe I'm just kinky that way? AND the Clash medusa was a D&D Greater Medusa, which had the serpentine lower torso vs normal lady-type legs.

You are not alone--that medusa is *hot*. Which I think is hilarious, because they're supposed to be the ugliest things ever.

Kakita Kojiro

01-01-2009 04:09 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9787633)

Oh, speaking of differences, the original gorgons all had wings and were swift fliers. Why does that rarely feature in roleplaying game versions of the monster? They don't have snaky lower bodies in the myths either, like Harryhausen's version or AD&D's greater medusa. Nor did their tails have rattles on the end, rattlesnakes being unavailable in ancient Greece.

Yeah, D&D really sucked the life and wonder out of Medeusa and replaced it with pure bleah.

Just calling them *Medeusas* is annoying to begin with -- they're *Gorgons*; EEG should have found some other name for iron-skinned bulls with petrifying breath.

In some sources, they're described as golden-scaled, brazen-winged -- cursed by Athena because they were more beautiful than her. Sounds like they were goddesses supplanted by the latecomer Olympians.

Furthermore, Athena then sends her boy to whack Medeusa just because she hadn't done enough to the poor girl, already. Which he does, and flies off with her head -- leaving poor, immortal Stheno and Euryale to grieve for their sister, forever. And, let's note, who *still* turn people who see them to stone... which was kind of the horror that we thought Perseus was supposed to be stopping, wasn't it? Except he couldn't have killed Stheno and Euryale, anyway, and his patroness caused the whole mess in the first place.

(in some tellings, Athena was miffed because Medeusa had the cheek to be raped in Athena's temple by Athena's uncle, Posiedon. lovely lady, Athena.)

Then, too, when Medeusa was killed, Pegasus and Chrysaor sprang forth. How cool is that?

Instead, we get "medeusas" with bows and arrows. bleah.

noisms

01-01-2009 04:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 9788065)

'kay, you're making me do this. 4E has male medusae, who either fight with longswords or poison people with their gaze. And they don't have snaky hair. Females remain as bow(wo)men with a petrifying gaze.

Of course, I'm pretty sure male medusae are coming up next in this thread. EDIT: Too slow.

Do the 4e types have the stone-to-flesh ability?

Kakita Kojiro

01-01-2009 04:20 AM

No, no stone-to-flesh ability. Although they do remember to be Immune petrification.

And they're just "Medeusa Warrior (Male)"; no mention of maedar.

Sleeper

01-01-2009 04:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9788377)

Yeah, D&D really sucked the life and wonder out of Medeusa and replaced it with pure bleah.

(snip a bunch of stuff from the always-cool Greek mythology)

*D&D is the Viking raider of legends, killing dozens of ancient mythologies and taking their best stuff. The results is a scattershot hodge-podge of creatures, some gloriously successful some... not (shedu, I'm thinking of you). Not a purist's game. It's *Dungeons & Dragons*, not *Mazes & Minotaurs*.*

Inyssius

01-01-2009 04:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9788412)

No, no stone-to-flesh ability. Although they do remember to be Immune petrification.

And they're just "Medeusa Warrior (Male)"; no mention of maedar.

Interestingly, however, female medusas are *not* immune to the poisonous, mind-affecting, weakening gaze of a maedar. Huh.

Kakita Kojiro

01-01-2009 04:53 AM

Huh, look at that. Moreover, male medeusas aren't immune to the slowing and immobilizing portions of the female medeusa's gaze.

One is left to assume that medeusas do it with the lights out, otherwise it's:

"ooh, baby!" *slowed, immobilized*

"yes, just like that" *damaged, dazed, weakened*

...

...

...

ooze wanders by and eats the both of them

Wakshaani

01-01-2009 07:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9788372)

You are not alone--that medusa is hot. Which I think is hilarious, because they're supposed to be the ugliest things ever.

Well, originally Medusa was turned into a Gorgon because either A) she had the audacity to be raped by Posiden in a temple of Athena or, more commonly, B) that she had the audacity to be prettier than Athena, who gave her snaketresses as a punishment.

Greek Gods ... kinda dickish.

Hellzon

01-01-2009 11:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9788931)
Greek Gods ... kinda dickish.

More like: Ancient gods... kinda dickish, isn't it? ;)

Inyssius

01-01-2009 11:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

More like: Gods ... kinda dickish, isn't it?:D

The Last Conformist

01-02-2009 12:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9787582)
The oldest version of the manticore I'm aware of is in Pliny, and they're quite different from the D&D version.

Pliny got his manticore from Ctesias (writing *ca* 400 BC), who probably got it from the Persians - as said above, the word surely comes from the Old Persian for "man-eater".

Interestingly, according to Livius.org, a related word, *mardomxôr*, is the modern Persian name for the tiger. Perhaps my skepticism regarding the manticore-tiger connection above was misplaced - then again, it's not hard to image the label "man-eater" being applied to several different animals, real and otherwise. It may be relevant that while "manticore" (from Greek *martikhoras* with a scribal slip r>n) and *mardomxôr* clearly involve the same roots, *mart*- "mortal man" and *xor*- "eat", they seem to have been formed differently.

demiurge1138

01-02-2009 02:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9788931)
Well, originally Medusa was turned into a Gorgon because either A) she had the audacity to be raped by Posiden in a temple of Athena or, more commonly, B) that she had the audacity to be prettier than Athena, who gave her snaketresses as a punishment.

Greek Gods ... kinda dickish.

Yes, I know. Original Medusa, the woman, tres hot. Medusa the Gorgon? Not so much. That was the whole

point of the exercise.

But the origin myth of Medusa cursed sort of conflicts with there being two other immortal gorgons, doesn't it? Or was Athena just inspired by the existence of gorgons for her curse? I don't recall it ever being explained.

Kakita Kojiro

01-02-2009 09:55 AM

Athena punished Medusa's sisters alongside Medusa, apparently for the same infraction -- whether "too pretty for their own good" or "dared to get raped in the wrong place" isn't really specified in the versions I've seen. Likewise no explanation of why Medusa is mortal while her sisters are immortal -- although all three are the daughters of deities (of whom differs depending on the version).

The gorgons were supposed to be *both* beautiful and horrible *at the same time*. They are beautiful monsters, and it is implied that you turn to stone because of their beauty and horror.

Which could probably be good for a Cthulu-esque riff, what with the death by seeing life-destroying beauty man was not meant to behold and all...

Sleeper

01-02-2009 02:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9792137)

The gorgons were supposed to be both beautiful and horrible at the same time. They are beautiful monsters, and it implied that you turn to stone because of their beauty and horror.

Which could probably be good for a Cthulu-esque riff, what with the death by seeing life-destroying beauty man was not meant to behold and all...

I really like that, though I'd say it's more a classical metaphorical approach than something that can be explained as an effect of Lovecraftian alienness. The victim is so perfectly trapped between attraction and repulsion that they become unable to move or act; as a statue, perfectly and eternally immobile.

kelvingreen

01-02-2009 06:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9792732)

I really like that, though I'd say it's more a classical metaphorical approach than something that can be explained as an effect of Lovecraftian alienness. The victim is so perfectly trapped between attraction and repulsion that they become unable to move or act; as a statue, perfectly and eternally immobile.

They're not incompatible, I'd argue.

JRM

01-02-2009 07:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9788485)

D&D is the Viking raider of legends, killing dozens of ancient mythologies and taking their best stuff. The results is a scattershot hodge-podge of creatures, some gloriously successful some... not (shedu, I'm thinking of you). Not a purist's game. It's Dungeons & Dragons, not Mazes & Minotaurs.

Oh I've got nothing against that approach, but to my mind they didn't steal all the best stuff from the medusa myth. What's cooler, a lass with reptile hair, or the same lass with golden skin, brazen wings? Still, it's easy enough to add, just bump up her AC and add a fly speed.

JRM

01-02-2009 07:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9792137)

The gorgons were supposed to be both beautiful and horrible at the same time. They are beautiful monsters, and it implied that you turn to stone because of their beauty and horror.

The problem is the myths go both ways, some say the cursed Medusa retained her beautiful face, others write of her being hideous and ugly. I guess you pays your money and takes your pick.

I have trouble reconciling the idea of gorgons being "*beautiful and horrible* at the same time" with classical Greek pictures of **winged gorgons**. Unless the ancients had a thing for protruding tongues, tusks and, in some cases, what appear to be beards I have difficulty believing they considered the cursed gorgons the epitome of feminine beauty.

There are also lots of pictures of Medusa with a beautiful face, unfortunately most of them show just her **severed head**, so we can't tell whether she had a winged or monstrous body attached to it. Although there are rare pictures of Medusa as a winged woman fair in both body and face, like **this one**.

So, maybe D&D should have five types of medusa:

Standard Medusa (beautiful woman)

Winged Medusa (beautiful woman with wings)

Gorgon Medusa (hideous woman with golden wings and scaly brazen skin)

Greater Medusa (hideous woman with serpentine lower body)

Winged Greater Medusa (hideous woman with wings and serpentine lower body)

Then we can make up more types of male medusa.:

EDIT: Speaking of male medusas*, when are you going to post the Maedar and the Glyptar, Noism? There are a couple of things I'd like to say about their Monstrous Compendium entries.

That reminds me, we forgot to have the traditional argument about what's the correct plural of medusa. Lots of dictionaries give "medusae" like the MM uses, but this is certain to give classical grammarians a fit. My best guess for the plural of the Greek version Medousa would be Medouson or Medousathes. Of course, the three sisters were collectively called the Gorgones or Gorgons anyway, but we know how D&D's bulled-up that name.

Sleeper

01-02-2009 08:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9793146)
So, maybe D&D should have five types of medusa:

Let's see. In keeping with D&D's early conventions, name them medusas, sthenos, euryales, gorgons, etc. Are the Greek and Latin names different?

Then make one half-snake, one beautiful and kills with a glare, one hideous with a petrifying gaze, and one with poisonous snakes for hair. One regenerates, one wears a serpent-belt that grants her her powers, one has wings and flies, one has skin of living bronze. One is a reclusive oracle, one has an order of dragon-sown knights called Aegis who wear her visage on their shields, and one is a flying undead head sent from hell to seek vengeance. One has blood that turns into a squirming mass of snakes and another has blood that can either be instantly fatal or raise the dead. Mix and match.

Poof. One myth, many distinct monsters.

JRM

01-02-2009 09:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9793235)
Let's see. In keeping with D&D's early conventions, name them medusas, sthenos, euryales, gorgons, etc. Are the Greek and Latin names different?

Well Sthenno and Euryale were basically identical in the myth, but that's no reason to stop us - maybe the scaly winged gorgons with legs are descended from Euryale, and ones with a serpentine lower body from Sthenno, or vica-versa?

The Greek and Latin names are different - Medusa being the Latin and Medousa the Greek.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9793235)
Then make one half-snake, one beautiful and kills with a glare, one hideous with a petrifying gaze, and one with poisonous snakes for hair. One regenerates, one wears a serpent-belt that grants her her powers, one has wings and

flies, one has skin of living bronze. One is a reclusive oracle, one has an order of dragon-sown knights called Aegis who wear her visage on their shields, and one is a flying undead head sent from hell to seek vengeance. One has blood that turns into a squirming mass of snakes and another has blood that can either be instantly fatal or raise the dead. Mix and match.

Poof. One myth, many distinct monsters.

Good ideas! That's how I like to fashion my mythological monsters to, riffing off the different legends. I was going to mention an "immortal" variety (regeneration and immunity to non-magical weapons, or literally divine?) in my earlier post, but decided to stick more or less to the mainstream.

Hmm...

Serpent belts? While there is mention of gorgons wearing serpents on or as belts, there's nothing to indicate they gave them their powers. Still, magical belts have a grand pedigree, so why not have them.

The Aegis-shielded bodyguard is a neat idea, although pedants may complain that they should be followers of Athena or Zeus, not the Gorgons. Now, do the shields channel their patrons' gaze-powers or just protect their bearers from being poisoned/petrified by their mistress?

The flying head may not be undead. Perhaps it's the severed head of an immortal medusa, searching far-and-wide for its hidden body so it can make itself whole again?

As for the blood, don't forget it can also spawn monsters. In AD&D terms, maybe such medusas automatically cast a *Monster Summoning* spell when injured?

The Last Conformist

01-02-2009 10:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9793146)

That reminds me, we forgot to have the traditional argument about what's the correct plural of medusa. Lots of dictionaries give "medusae" like the MM uses, but this is certain to give classical grammarians a fit. My best guess for the plural of the Greek version Medousa would be Medouson or Medousathes. Of course, the three sisters were collectively called the Gorgones or Gorgons anyway, but we know how D&D's bulled-up that name.

I don't know about the Greek, but in Latin already classical authors used the name as a regular first declination feminine, the plural of which, if there were one, would indeed be "medusae".

JRM

01-02-2009 11:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9793422)

I don't know about the Greek, but in Latin already classical authors used the name as a regular first declination feminine, the plural of which, if there were one, would indeed be "medusae".

Yes, medusae is the plural of medusa in Latin. I must confess I only added that remark to tease Kakita Kojiro, knowing his abiding passion about -ae endings on plurals of names that were originally Greek (or, worse, neither Greek nor Latin).

I was just being a rotter.:D

The Last Conformist

01-03-2009 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9793538)
Yes, medusae is the plural of medusa in Latin.

Yes, but medusae means jellyfish. The D&D monster is presumably named for the mythological character, who there only was one of, and biological Latin doesn't always follow the same norms as classical literature.

Inyssius

01-03-2009 01:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In 3.X and 4, they're invariably called medusas.

JRM

01-03-2009 02:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9793963)
Yes, but medusae means jellyfish. The D&D monster is presumably named for the mythological character, who there only was one of, and biological Latin doesn't always follow the same norms as classical literature.

We've already brought up the jellyfish connection on this thread back when we were discussing Hydras. Another monster that was originally a single female in Greek myth and became a RPG beastie and a type of cnidian.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9794000)

In 3.X and 4, they're invariably called medusas.

What a bunch of spoilsports! Arguing over the proper plural of monsters is half the fun.:p

Although I suspect a search of the rules would probably find a mention or two of medusae which slipped through, give me a second...

...Aha!

According to www.d20srd.org there's a single use of medusae in the **variant campaign rules on sanity**.

Kakita Kojiro

01-03-2009 02:32 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9793538)

Yes, medusae is the plural of medusa in Latin. I must confess I only added that remark to tease Kakita Kojiro, knowing his abiding passion about -ae endings on plurals of names that were originally Greek (or, worse, neither Greek nor Latin).

I was just being a rotter.:D

Eh, in this particular case my outrage over dodgy pluralizations is superceded by the silliness of trying to pluralize someone's *proper name*. If they were going to do that and use an authentic plural, I suppose they should've been Medousides, or something.

But since they' went the dumb route, just stick an -s on the end and be done with it. It always faintly reminds me of nouns like "johns", anyway.

Nice idea to steal the names of Stheno and Euryale too, though. There was actually an obscure *male* gorgon IIRC (*googles*)... "Nanas". Looks like he was "Zeus' guardian" -- with no further references, so maybe from his infancy on Mount Ida. (which might make Nanas one of the kouretes). So that name could be swiped for the "male medeusas".

Alas, since it already ends with an -s, though, we're back to dodgy plurals with it.

JasonK

01-03-2009 02:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9793235)

...and one is a flying undead head sent from hell to seek vengeance. ...

That'd be the one that shows up in Castlevania. :)

~ jasön

Sleeper

01-03-2009 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9793319)

The Aegis-shielded bodyguard is a neat idea, although pedants may complain that they should be followers of Athena or Zeus, not the Gorgons. Now, do the shields channel their patrons' gaze-powers or just protect their bearer from being poisoned/petrified by their mistress?

The flying head may not be undead. Perhaps it's the severed head of an immortal medusa, searching far-and-wide for its hidden body so it can make itself whole again?

That's okay. Pedants obsessed with rigorous adherence to the originals myths ran screaming the first time they cracked the Monstrous Manual. ;)

The flying head is based on a creative interpretation of a passage from the Odyssey, where Persephone supposedly threatens to send up a dreadful head from Hades. Since the gorgon is considered a cthonic deity, this might one of the better links to Lovecraftian interpretation.

And the serpent belt is just an excuse to fashion a new magic item, a la the swanmay's cloak. Could also make the gorgoneion, a powerful mask with strange powers and a creeping sentience made by carving the skin from her living face. The Aegis is obvious. Or make the myth into a kit or a prestige class or paragon path; female rage personified. Akin to the maenad, with mad eyes, fangs, hair that seems to twist and curl on its own. Or mix in elements from the Granae; call them graneas, and focus on the trinity. Share a rolling eye amongst them, with oracular vision and the evil eye, capable of freezing men in their place.

JRM

01-03-2009 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

[quote=Kakita Kojiro;9794123]Eh, in this particular case my outrage over dodgy pluralizations is superceeded by the silliness of trying to pluralize someone's *proper name*. If they were going to do that and use an authentic plural, I suppose they should've been Medousides, or something./QUOTE]

Didn't we raise the same point about the Hydra? There must be a lot of unique mythological monsters whose proper names became a species name after being adapted into a RPG, such as the Chimera (another unrecognized female). I'm surprised it doesn't happen more often, leaving D&D replete with monsters based on Cerberus (the Kerberoi?), Scylla and the like.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9794123)

Nice idea to steal the names of Stheno and Euryale too, though.

Credit where it's due, it was **Sleeper** who first posted the idea on this thread.

As for the proposed D&D monsters I think it made more sense to, ah, "borrow" the name of Euryale for the scaly winged gorgons with legs and Sthenno for winged gorgons who are snaky below the waist. Sthenno means strong or forceful and, in AD&D, it's the greater medusas who have tails. Plus, Euryale means something like far-wandering, far-springer or wide-stepping, which may require the existence of legs, depending on how literal the translation of "stepping" is. I have no idea if that's so, since my Greek is nearly non-existent,

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9794123)

*There was actually an obscure male gorgon IIRC (*googles*)... "Nanas". Looks like he was "Zeus' guardian" -- with no further references, so maybe from his infancy on Mount Ida. (which might make Nanas one of the kouretes). So that name could be swiped for the "male medusas".*

Alas, since it already ends with an -s, though, we're back to dodgy plurals with it.

Now that is interesting, I've never heard of a male gorgon before. Do you have any references to original sources? All I can find after a short google is duplicates of the same information you posted above. A bit more googling revealed Nanas was an Etruscan proper name (e.g. the Etruscan King named Nanas, son of Tutamides), maybe meaning "wanderer", and the Etruscans were pretty fond of gorgon imagery. I wonder whether there's any connection?

As for the plural, in modern Greek a masculine Nanas would likely pluralize to Nanes, so why not use that?

Inyssi

01-03-2009 06:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9794799)

As for the plural, in modern Greek a masculine Nanas would likely pluralize to Nanes, so why not use that?

"Adventurers, beware: there's a gigantic Nane in those mountains."

JRM

01-03-2009 07:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssi (Post 9794932)

"Adventurers, beware: there's a gigantic Nane in those mountains."

Eh? Nanas would still be the singular, regardless of whether I'm right in guessing the plural would be Nanes. Those adventurers better watch out, there may be more than one of them!

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9794799)

Didn't we raise the same point about the Hydra? There must be a lot of unique mythological monsters whose proper names became a species name after being adapted into a RPG, such as the Chimera (another unrecognized female). I'm surprised it doesn't happen more often, leaving D&D replete with monsters based on Cerberus (the Kerberoi?), Scylla and the like.

Well, the original use of "Hydra" and "Chimera" parallels that of "Gorgon". The gorgon most talked about is named Medeusa. For all we know, the Hydra could have been named Bob.

I'm irked by using the *wrong* declension for words that describe a species, category, whatever -- I'd say, either use the correct original plural, or just admit you're speaking English and stick an -s on it. Bad Latin plurals make the zombie baby Jesus cry.

However. If you are turning someone's *name* into a species, category, whatever... heck, just stick an -s on the thing. It's *already* rather silly, and I'm just thankful that Medieval bestiarists didn't call a completely different monster a "Hydra", or we'd've been stuck with Gygax giving us Lernean Bobs and Pyrobobs and Cryobobs and Og knows what all else.

'Sides, I'm a *groggnard*; I'm *expected* to have eccentric opinions. It's in the grognard bylaws, and all.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9795024)

Eh? Nanas would still be the singular, regardless of whether I'm right in guessing the plural would be Nanes. Those adventurers better watch out, there may be more than one of them!

Well, yeah. But unless your players are linguists (*some* of mine are), they'll probably just assume "Nanes" to be a regular English plural, and mis-extrapolate to "Nane" being the singular. They'd expect "Nanases" as the plural from English rules.

Mind you, the linguist in my group would decry "Nanases" and insist on "Nanes", while his wife would tell us that we're being stupid. If D&D had a "Pedant" class, that'd be all my group would play. :)

Edit: forgot; no, alas, I don't have an original source for the male gorgon. I'm not really sure where I first read about that.

JRM

01-03-2009 06:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9795254)

Well, the original use of "Hydra" and "Chimera" parallels that of "Gorgon". The gorgon most talked about is named Medeusa. For all we know, the Hydra could have been named Bob.

I'll grant that Hydra may be a bad example for a proper name (even the phrase 'Lernean Hydra' implies that outside the Lernean marshes other examples of her kind could exist), there are better examples. Talking about Greek serpent/dragon monsters, we've got Echidna and Python, both proper names that have become entire genera of animals.* Speaking of Echidna, even classical authors used that as a proper name and a generic one (e.g. Ovid refers to the Hydra as the Echidna Lernaia in Metamorphoses).

*But at least their English plurals are simply pythons and echidnas, so you don't have to suffer "echidnae".:eek:

EDIT: On second thoughts, echidna is a bad example, since it means 'viper' in Greek. Unless venomous snakes were named after Echidna instead of vice-versa. It's not as strong as Python becoming pythons.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9795254)

'Sides, I'm a grognard; I'm expected to have eccentric opinions. It's in the grognard bylaws, and all.

As a card-carrying grognard myself I sympathize. Do you use the original bylaws? I can't abide the new ones the revision committee is proposing. When they're not written in A5 booklets, it just doesn't feel right. ;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9795254)

Edit: forgot; no, alas, I don't have an original source for the male gorgon. I'm not really sure where I first read about that.

That's unfortunate, I have a nasty suspicion it may be a post-classical innovation or a misinterpretation, and would like some confirmation. I'm just hoping some scholar didn't find an Etruscan coin from King Nana's reign decorated with a gorgon's head and jumped to an erroneous conclusion.

noisms

01-03-2009 07:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Medusa, Maedar

More pseudo-mythological ancient Greek goodness comes in the form of the Maedar - the male medusa. He doesn't have snakes or petrification breath, but he can pass through solid rock, turn stone to flesh, and beat you up with 2d4-dealing fists. But if you catch him with a phase door spell while he's passing through stone, he's curtains.

Maedar are ridiculously rare, and in fact if you think about it for even a second you realise that their numbers are probably declining all the time - when they impregnate a Medusa there is only a 1% chance of a Maedar child being born (all the rest are human young who are instantly petrified by their mother), which would indicate that most Maedar never manage to propagate themselves. Unless they're either incredibly long-lived or the whole strictly-monogamous thing is a huge lie.

I'm interested in why human Medusa babies are always petrified by their mother. Would not Medusae (whatever) love all their young and want to protect them? You could imagine a Maedar taking the young away from the mother as

soon as they are born, so she has no chance to look at them, and then either raising them separately from her or maybe depositing them with unknowing foster parents of some kind. That could make an interesting 'special snowflake' character background for a PC - the human young of a Medusa and Maedar, raised in the local village.

Glyptar

Glyptar are the spirits of 'extremely evil' Maedar who transfer their souls to rocks before death. They float around beneath the earth until they eventually become trapped in rock crystals and, of course, go insane. They can then be used to animate golems, swords, and presumably whatever else you can put a crystal in.

Wakboth

01-03-2009 11:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9796660)

Maedar are ridiculously rare, and in fact if you think about it for even a second you realise that their numbers are probably declining all the time - when they impregnate a Medusa there is only a 1% chance of a Maedar child being born (all the rest are human young who are instantly petrified by their mother), which would indicate that most Maedar never manage to propagate themselves. Unless they're either incredibly long-lived or the whole strictly-monogamous thing is a huge lie.

Medusas and maedars have it worse than even the sphinxes, who are well known for having really wonky sex lives...

Quote:

Glyptar are the spirits of 'extremely evil' Maedar who transfer their souls to rocks before death. They float around beneath the earth until they eventually become trapped in rock crystals and, of course, go insane. They can then be used to animate golems, swords, and presumably whatever else you can put a crystal in.

A zombie with a crystal eye?

JRM

01-04-2009 12:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9796660)

Medusa, Maedar

Maedar are ridiculously rare, and in fact if you think about it for even a second you realise that their numbers are probably declining all the time - when they impregnate a Medusa there is only a 1% chance of a Maedar child being born (all the rest are human young who are instantly petrified by their mother), which would indicate that most Maedar never manage to propagate themselves. Unless they're either incredibly long-lived or the whole strictly-

monogamous thing is a huge lie.

It's worse than that, a Maedar-Medusa pairing results in 25% males and 75% females, and ALL the females and 99% of the males are petrified on sight of their mother. That means each Maedar must sire an average of four hundred babies just to replace its own numbers, and produces no (zero, zilch, nada) Medusas in the process. However, when a Medusa mates with a human all the babies are medusas.

EDIT: And that's assuming all the boys make it to maturity, considering the dangers of the dungeon lots of them will be killed before breeding so the maedar would likely have to sire several times 400 infants to account for losses. As there's only 2-6 per clutch, this would surely take a very long time. It's made worse by Maedar being monogamists - they only have one mate to produce children with, and going by the fluff text they are so devoted they may never take another one if she dies. :END EDIT

How the blazes does that make sense! A female medusa can only perpetuate females by not mating with her own kind.

I'd have rewritten it to somethings like: A medusa can mate with either a human male or a maedar, in either case the resulting offspring are 25% male and 75% female. Male babies resulting from a medusa-human pairing are only 1% likely to be Maedar, while female babies are 50% likely to be medusa. A medusa-maedar pairing always results in medusa and maedar offspring.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9796660)

I'm interested in why human Medusa babies are always petrified by their mother. Would not Medusae (whatever) love all their young and want to protect them? You could imagine a Maedar taking the young away from the mother as soon as they are born, so she has no chance to look at them, and then either raising them separately from her or maybe depositing them with unknowing foster parents of some kind. That could make an interesting 'special snowflake' character background for a PC - the human young of a Medusa and Maedar, raised in the local village.

Ooh, that sounds like a good plot hook. Maybe a medusa or maedar becomes the secret patron/founder of an orphanage to house their offspring, at least until they grow large enough to reveal whether they're medusas or unwanted humans?

As for petrifying the human babies, the AD&D medusa can't switch its gaze's petrifying power off (except by closing its eyes), and I guess the assumption is they are cold-hearted enough not to care about their human children.

Although how human can they really be, considering they are "fledgelings" that hatch from eggs.

Come to think of it, if two "humans" born from medusas mate, is there a small chance the baby will grown into a medusa or maedar? That could be the basis of an interesting character. I'm imagining a beautiful LG human priestess who suddenly starts growing snaky hair as a teenager.

Maybe that's how Medousa really became a Gorgon.:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9796660)

Glyptar

Glyptar are the spirits of 'extremely evil' Maedar who transfer their souls to rocks before death. They float around

beneath the earth until they eventually become trapped in rock crystals and, of course, go insane. They can then be used to animate golems, swords, and presumably whatever else you can put a crystal in.

One thing bugged me about this. Any Maedar can send his spirit into the rock before dying, but only the extremely evil ones retain their consciousness. What about the moderately evil ones or even the blessedly good ones, do their spirits simply wander mindless for all eternity or disperse?

Sleeper

01-04-2009 02:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9797139)

It's worse than that, a Maedar-Medusa pairing results in 25% males and 75% females, and ALL the females and 99% of the males are petrified on sight of their mother. That means each Maedar must sire an average of four hundred babies just to replace its own numbers, and produces no (zero, zilch, nada) Medusas in the process. However, when a Medusa mates with a human all the babies are medusas.

Maybe they're not really evil. Maybe they're just driven mad (in the Lancelot running through the woods like a wild man kind of madness, not based on any modern clinical understanding) by the tragic curse of their species. Consumed by the ultimate in true and devoted courtly love; and yet their joyous union leads to dead children, by the dozens. Tiny grasping hands, frozen perpetually in the act of reaching for their mother. This tragedy alone perhaps could be borne, but mocking them is that tiny sliver of hope, that this child, or the next, might be the one in many hundreds to survive, to thrive. And even that is a shallow joke, because the vanishingly rare survivor is always male. Female children can only be born through infidelity. A romantic tragedy for the ages.

demiurge1138

01-04-2009 02:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

As far as "special snowflake" characters go, the human child of a medusa is a pretty good concept. Maybe a spellcaster focusing on earth and poison magic, or a fantastic archer... I'm getting PC ideas from this thread, which isn't how it usually happens!

I am proud to note that I was a contributor to the 3e stats of the maedar, as they appear in Dragon 355. I only worked on the statistics, not the flavor text--which, by the way, only has medusas giving birth to humans if they have sex with humans (which makes more damn sense). At my urging, they were given the ability to overcome hardness and the Improved Sunder feat, so they can actually pull off that trick of smashing apart medusa-created statues and then turning them back into meat. The fact that they could then do it to PC weapons...

Wakboth

01-04-2009 05:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

While we're speaking of medusas, I had an unusual, good-aligned medusa NPC in one game. She had some loyal human servants (she'd saved them from the orcs who'd captured them by turning the orcs into stone, and then taken the orcs' loot) who wore blindfolds around her, and always wore heavy veils and a hooded cloak when traveling.

She was courting a local nobleman (one of the PCs) through letters, hoping to convince him of her good intentions and pure heart so that he wouldn't get shocked when he would eventually find out that she was a medusa. Unfortunately, the game fell apart long before that.

kelvingreen

01-04-2009 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9794123)

*There was actually an obscure male gorgon IIRC (*googles*)... "Nanas". So that name could be swiped for the "male medeusas".*

Only then, mischievous players would expect them to either look like yellow fruit, or old ladies wielding bags of sweets...

Vultur10

01-04-2009 06:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

[Scholarly mentions of male gorgons in Roman British art](#)

[A male gorgon, son of Typhon and Echidna and father of the female gorgons \(!\); attributed to Hyginus](#)

So, the idea of a male Gorgon seems to have been around in the classical period. Interesting.

Zartes

01-04-2009 11:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Wow, lots of cool ideas for using Medusas... Medusae.. Medu-thingies.

For my own part, having noted the fact that "disturbingly realistic statues" always tip off the PCs, I now want to put a Medusa into my next campaign who doesn't have such a "statue" garden. Because she's blind, and thus can't petrify anybody.

Of course, to make up for it, she's a spectacular blind-fighter, and can make very good use of her snake-hair.

I'm imagining her weilding a cane, dressed in a semi-victorian style lady's dress, and with small, round sunglasses to cover her gaping eye sockets.

Kakita Kojiro

01-04-2009 02:12 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9798085)

A male gorgon, son of Typhon and Echidna and father of the female gorgons (!); attributed to Hyginus

Ooh, this link continues on with some good stuff about the gorgons, connecting them to the Erinyes (originals, not the D&D devils) and sea nymphs. And a cute note about "only a few of her snakes stayed awake to guard her" when Medusa was asleep at Perseus' approach.

I've always wondered how that worked for "medeusas" -- are their little snakes independent critters? Or is it just an extra bunch of little eyes to use? You'd think that would be a better combat advantage to exploit than using the things to bite adventurers. Frankly, I'm dubious about the tactic of *shoving your coiffure* at people armed with sharp, pointy things.

sim_james

01-04-2009 02:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9798931)

For my own part, having noted the fact that "disturbingly realistic statues" always tip off the PCs, I now want to put Medusa into my next campaign who doesn't have such a "statue" garden. Because she's blind, and thus can't petrify anybody.

There was a blind medusa in one of Monte Cook's *Ghostwalk* adventures, if I recall correctly.

Inyssi

01-04-2009 02:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9798931)

For my own part, having noted the fact that "disturbingly realistic statues" always tip off the PCs, I now want to put Medusa into my next campaign who doesn't have such a "statue" garden. Because she's blind, and thus can't petrify anybody.

Hmm... waitaminute. How about a band of humanoid gargoyles who keep a medusa slave to assuage suspicion? No player will *ever* ignore any statue you mention, but they'll pass right over the poor mooks in a medusa's garden.

Right?

And then, once they've dealt with the gargoyles, they have to deal with an innocent medusa. Or, um, "innocent" medusa. Who still turns people to stone at a glance in any case.

noisms

01-04-2009 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9799434)

Ooh, this link continues on with some good stuff about the gorgons, connecting them to the Erinyes (originals, not the D&D devils) and sea nymphs. And a cute note about "only a few of her snakes stayed awake to guard her" when Medeusa was asleep at Perseus' approach.

I've always wondered how that worked for "medeusas" -- are their little snakes independent critters? Or is it just an extra bunch of little eyes to use? You'd think that would be a better combat advantage to exploit than using the things to bite adventurers. Frankly, I'm dubious about the tactic of shoving your coiffure at people armed with sharp pointy things.

Maybe the snakes stretch out for a couple of feet? They would pretty much have to, I think. Then the medusa could just whip her head around and generate a kind of whirlygig of snake poison death.

I like how the Diterlizzi picture has the snakes bound up into a pony tail. Are there medusa hair stylists, I wonder?

Zartes

01-04-2009 05:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9799761)

Maybe the snakes stretch out for a couple of feet? They would pretty much have to, I think. Then the medusa could just whip her head around and generate a kind of whirlygig of snake poison death.

I like how the Diterlizzi picture has the snakes bound up into a pony tail. Are there medusa hair stylists, I wonder?

Hair stylist, snake charmer... same thing :p

JRM

01-04-2009 07:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9798085)

Scholarly mentions of male gorgons in Roman British art

Well, after a bit of thought the first example doesn't really convince me.

Firstly, how do we know it's a gorgon? The text describes it as a conflation of Medousa and Neptune, which opens the possibility it's a god or daimon with snaky aspects rather than a gorgon per se. Roman myth feature other entities with snake-parts, so it may be a representation a Cthonic being like Typhon. Alternatively, it may be a Celtic deity such as the god Cernunnos, who usually has snakes on its horned head. Indeed, after a bit of googling I found several descriptions of a "horned male gorgon" on sculpture or coin which might well be a horned god.

Secondly, the sculpture's just a head, so how can we be sure it is male? As I mentioned earlier, there are many images of female gorgons with beards (at least they have female dress and body-shape), so unless there's an inscription giving a masculine name its gender is, ah, problematic.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9798085)

A male gorgon, son of Typhon and Echidna and father of the female gorgons (!); attributed to Hyginus

So, the idea of a male Gorgon seems to have been around in the classical period. Interesting.

Now that's much more promising, since it gives an author and parentage.

Aha! here we are, it's a reference to the [GORGO AIX](#), who some sources say was the mother *or the father* of the three Gorgon sisters. However, and I quote theoi.com "An elder Gorgon was sometimes described as the father of Medousa and her sister Gorgones. This figure may be the same as Aix, for the primeval Gorgon was of indeterminable gender or at best a bearded woman."

So we may be talking about a hermaphrodite/transsexual/asexual gorgon here, not a male one.

JRM

01-04-2009 07:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9799761)

Maybe the snakes stretch out for a couple of feet? They would pretty much have to, I think. Then the medusa could just whip her head around and generate a kind of whirlygig of snake poison death.

I like how the Diterlizzi picture has the snakes bound up into a pony tail. Are there medusa hair stylists, I wonder?

Yes, I always fancied gorgons with long hair, say a yard or more. Of course, traditional images of gorgons show them with shortish snakes only 6-9" long but they didn't have conditioner back in those days, so suffered a lot from split ends.:)

JRM

01-04-2009 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9799498)

Hmm... waitaminute. How about a band of humanoid gargoyles who keep a medusa slave to assuage suspicion? No player will ever ignore any statue you mention, but they'll pass right over the poor mooks in a medusa's garden.

Right?

And then, once they've dealt with the gargoyles, they have to deal with an innocent medusa. Or, um, "innocent" medusa. Who still turns people to stone at a glance in any case.

Oh I approve, the old "reverse the player's expectations" trick. Although come to think of it, wouldn't it make a lot of sense if a Maeder pretends to be a statue in his medusa mate's garden?

JRM

01-04-2009 07:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9799434)

Ooh, this link continues on with some good stuff about the gorgons, connecting them to the Erinyes (originals, not the D&D devils) and sea nymphs. And a cute note about "only a few of her snakes stayed awake to guard her" when Medeusa was asleep at Perseus' approach.

I've always wondered how that worked for "medeusas" -- are their little snakes independent critters? Or is it just an extra bunch of little eyes to use? You'd think that would be a better combat advantage to exploit than using the things to bite adventurers. Frankly, I'm dubious about the tactic of shoving your coiffure at people armed with sharp, pointy things.

Presumably they're a bit like an octopus's arms and each have their own "sub-mind" to control them, so the medusa issues general directives ("all snakes bite foes forward", "wake me if you see movement") which the snake-heads interpret. That would likely mean they're incapable of coordinated or highly dexterous action, which fits my conception of gorgon hair. It also opens the idea of a neurological disease that causes a gorgon to lose control of its snakes, maybe a species of schizophrenia?

noisms

01-04-2009 09:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I love this thread. Schizophrenic medusa hair.

Sleeper

01-04-2009 10:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9799919)

Yes, I always fancied gorgons with long hair, say a yard or more. Of course, traditional images of gorgons show them with shortish snakes only 6-9" long but they didn't have conditioner back in those days, so suffered a lot from split ends.:)

Lernean medusas?

Hmm. To start on almost entirely unrelated tangent, perhaps that's just part of the nature of snakes. They do have split tongues, after all. Occasionally, one takes after their biological namesake, those little flat worm things that can be chopped up in all kinds of ways and still grow back. But serpents aren't lizards. Chop off the tail, and it won't grow back. As a tail at least. But sometimes, you get a second head.

Those two-headed ouroboros serpents are called amphisbaenas. Then the question becomes, what happens when you chop off the head of a naturally forked serpent, instead? Or one of the two heads, of an already forked amphisbaena? The head grows back, and then an extra alongside it.

A three- or more- headed snake won't last long. They'd start having trouble moving. You can't slither in three, four, five directions at once. They figure out a new way to get around. So after a while, they start to bulge in the middle, and grow legs.

And that's where the Lernean hydras come from. A simple snake once, that got beheaded too many times.

JRM

01-04-2009 11:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9800222)

Lernean medusas?

That very idea occurred to me when I wrote that semi-joking remark about medusas with split ends, but I took it a different way. Maybe if a medusa doesn't control her hair, letting her snakes grow too long and too numerous, all those little snakey sub-minds begin to overwhelm her sapient, humanoid nature and she begins to turn into a beast, her feminine body mutating into something more draconic. Then hey presto!, we've got a hydra.

JRM

01-04-2009 11:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9797542)

Maybe they're not really evil. Maybe they're just driven mad (in the Lancelot running through the woods like a wild man kind of madness, not based on any modern clinical understanding) by the tragic curse of their species. Consumed by the ultimate in true and devoted courtly love; and yet their joyous union leads to dead children, by the

dozens. Tiny grasping hands, frozen perpetually in the act of reaching for their mother. This tragedy alone perhaps could be borne, but mocking them is that tiny sliver of hope, that this child, or the next, might be the one in many hundreds to survive, to thrive. And even that is a shallow joke, because the vanishingly rare survivor is always male. Female children can only be born through infidelity. A romantic tragedy for the ages.

That would certainly work if they are medusas due to a divine curse, like the original Medousa was in some myths. I wouldn't put it past a certain Greek Goddess to damn a person with "your husband and children will be petrified before your eyes".

As far as medusas as a race of creatures, it doesn't make to much sense. Why would the females medusas breed with their males if it is going to end in heartbreak for 99.75% of the offspring? Far better to stick to blindfolded human males, they're sure of always getting viable children that way.

Even if medusas felt no emotional trauma from the loss of human children resulting from a union with a Maedar, just consider the physical stress they'd have to undergo to produce hundreds of kids in clutches of 2-6, each of them as large as a human infant. I doubt an ordinary mammal or reptile of a medusa's size could produce a tenth that many babies without dying of internal trauma or exhaustion.

noisms

01-05-2009 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Merman

My imaginary AD&D playing Germaine Greer style feminist would be pissed off at the title of this entry, no doubt. Merfolk, I think is the more PC term. Made up of Mermen and Merwomen. Not Mermaids. No. The one in the picture is hot, though, whatever you choose to call her.

Mermen in AD&D aren't as interesting as they could have been. I'm sure Mermaids were traditionally siren-like figures in most mythologies, tempting sailors and fishermen beneath the waves to a watery death. There are admittedly rather a lot of that sort of creature in the MM, but it gives the Mermaids something to do at least. As it stands they just seem to be glorified underwater housewives for the males.

And nor do the males seem to be particularly well fleshed out. They live in underwater communities, eat a lot of fish, and like to ambush ships from underneath. No surprises there.

Mermen can't survive for long out of water, and start to dehydrate. I don't believe that the same is true of the other aquatic races, though I could be wrong.

demiurge1138

01-05-2009 02:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Aquatic elves also suffer from dehydration, if memory serves me right. So do their weird fishy counterparts, the sahaugin.

What I think is neat is that in most tales about mermaids, the male mers were in fact huge and monstrous. That's where the name "merrow" comes from, which is used in D&D for aquatic ogres. But what if those aquatic ogres were indeed male merfolk? The "mermen" one might see would be adolescent mers, not yet fully grown to large size and mighty strength.

JRM

01-05-2009 03:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9800771)

Aquatic elves also suffer from dehydration, if memory serves me right. So do their weird fishy counterparts, the sahaugin.

Goes to check

"Sea elves can survive on land for a few minutes at a time, though in a state of growing discomfort." ... "Even with magical assistance to enable them to breathe air, aquatic elves are uncomfortable above the waves, and so very few have seen the forests that the high elves speak of with such enthusiasm."

Yup, looks like your memory did not fail you.

The Locathah suffer dehydration on land too. Curiously, there's no mention of dehydration in the Triton's entry, and they don't even have a land speed!

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9800771)

What I think is neat is that in most tales about mermaids, the male mers were in fact huge and monstrous. That's where the name "merrow" comes from, which is used in D&D for aquatic ogres. But what if those aquatic ogres were indeed male merfolk? The "mermen" one might see would be adolescent mers, not yet fully grown to large size and mighty strength.

So if that is true, then if a land-dweller falls in love with an adolescent merman, one half of the relationship could literally turn ugly.:o

JRM

01-05-2009 03:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9800647)

Merman

Mermen in AD&D aren't as interesting as they could have been. I'm sure Mermaids were traditionally siren-like figures in most mythologies, tempting sailors and fishermen beneath the waves to a watery death. There are admittedly rather a lot of that sort of creature in the MM, but it gives the Mermaids something to do at least. As it stands they just seem to be glorified underwater housewives for the males.

That's what strikes me most about the Merman entry, it's really pretty dull.

Considering the wealth of legend about merpeople you'd think they'd be able to come up with something a bit more interesting: Mermaid priestesses with Charm spells, Mermen Kings able to lead a communal casting of a summon storm spell, the ability to temporarily assume fully human form to venture on land, some interesting custom or interaction with another underwater race or just, well, something to add to their MM traits of isolationism, underwater crossbows and attaching grapples to ship.

Oh, and how do you go about herding fish? Would it help to have a aquatic equivalent of a border collie? The sea elves have their dolphin partners, who'd be ideal for such a task, but Merfolk have **trained barracudas**. Are these barracudas a particularly intelligent breed who can play fetch and herd cod, or are merely vicious guardians who bite anyone they recognize as an intruder?

JRM

01-05-2009 03:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9800873)

*Oh, and how do you go about herding fish? Would it help to have a aquatic equivalent of a border collie? The sea elves have their dolphin partners, who'd be ideal for such a task, but Merfolk have **trained barracudas**. Are these barracudas a particularly intelligent breed who can play fetch and herd cod, or are merely vicious guardians who bite anyone they recognize as an intruder?*

Oh dear, I wish I'd never thought of that. Now I'm visualizing a barracuda wearing a shiny collar, that swims up to people and communicates via body-language and weird, unbarracuda-like noises:

*"What's that boy? Little Ariel has beached on Merrow Rock?
Quickly my compadres, the Sea Caballeros must ride to the rescue!"*

music

Finny, Finny, Finny the Reef Barracuda

I'd go on longer, but will spare you... I couldn't remember any more of the lyrics for **Skippy**, anyway.:D

kami2awa

01-05-2009 04:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9800370)

That would certainly work if they are medusas due to a divine curse, like the original Medousa was in some myths. I wouldn't put it past a certain Greek Goddess to damn a person with "your husband and children will be petrified before your eyes".

As far as medusas as a race of creatures, it doesn't make to much sense. Why would the females medusas breed with their males if it is going to end in heartbreak for 99.75% of the offspring? Far better to stick to blindfolded human males, they're sure of always getting viable children that way.

Or BLIND human males. Which leads to a number of possibilities; e.g. a blind, saintly LG man in love with a medusa (creating a dilemma for good PCs if they think all Medusa are evil - she might be, she might not, and that's doubly true for any offspring), and evil medusa who put out someones eyes to make them a love slave, or even a blind man living isolated from the world who doesn't realise his girlfriend has a certain secret...

Sleeper

01-05-2009 04:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9800873)

Considering the wealth of legend about merpeople you'd think they'd be able to come up with something a bit more interesting:

Yes, I can't think of a time I used mer(women/men). The entry is just so uninspired. Overall, the aquatic races seem to suffer from a bout of blandness. Sahuagin and tritons and kuo-toa have a little flavor, but the merthings and locathah and the one-short-paragraph notes under elves, ogres, and even ghouls are dull. Shame. There's some good source material.

I'd avoid the Little Mermaid associations, or at least draw on elements that are present in the original story and downplay the Disney characteristics. My personal favorite treatment of merfolk is in Poul Anderson's *The Merman's Children*, but their role as one of the amoral and inhuman races of fey who lack souls and are persecuted by the Church doesn't really work in D&D, and even their conflict with the kraken would be outside the rules. Though there are certainly aspects of the story that remind me of Lovecraft's deep ones, which might make a better reskinning for merfolk than the more obvious kuo-toa.

Wakboth

01-05-2009 04:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9800873)

That's what strikes me most about the Merman entry, it's really pretty dull.

I think all the underwater races get pretty dull entries. Well, apart from Sahuagin, who are neat.

The mermaid in the illustration always reminded me of Ariel, too. It's not a bad pic, but... it's a bit boring, just like the rest of the entry.

Kakita Kojiro

01-05-2009 05:24 AM

I'm curious; someone with the Manual at hand want to check the various swim speeds and tell us which aquatic race is slowest/fastest? I vaguely recall being mildly surprised at how random they all seemed... before I moved on to reading about monsters I'd actually use.

JRM

01-05-2009 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9800994)

Or BLIND human males. Which leads to a number of possibilities; e.g. a blind, saintly LG man in love with a medusa (creating a dilemma for good PCs if they think all Medusa are evil - she might be, she might not, and that's doubly true for any offspring), and evil medusa who put out someones eyes to make them a love slave, or even a blind man living isolated from the world who doesn't realise his girlfriend has a certain secret...

He'd have to deaf as well not to hear the hissing from her hair.:D

Not to mention that she'd find it very difficult to have any intimate relations with her blind beau without him feeling there's something different about her head - I guess she could insist she belongs to an obscure cult which doesn't approve of people touching their heads, but it'd be tricky.

JRM

01-05-2009 05:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9801143)

I'm curious; someone with the Manual at hand want to check the various swim speeds and tell us which aquatic race is slowest/fastest? I vaguely recall being mildly surprised at how random they all seemed... before I moved on to reading about monsters I'd actually use.

OK, I think these are all the humanoid, vaguely humanoid, ex-humanoid (in the case of Lacedons) and optionally humanoid aquatic races. If anyone notices any that are missing, it's easy enough to re-edit the list.

In alphabetical order as they appear in the Monstrous Manual:

Crabman - 9, Sw 6

Elf, Aquatic - 9, Sw 15

Gargoyle, Kapoacanth - 9, Sw 15 [*plus possibly FI 15(C)?*]

Ghoul, Lacedon - Sw 9

Giant, Reef - 15, Sw 12

Giant, Storm - 15, Sw 15

Hobgoblin, Koalanth - 9, Sw 12

Kuo-Toa - 9, Sw 18

Ixitxachitl - Sw 12
Locathah - 1, Sw 12
Lycanthrope, Lesser Seawolf - 12, Sw 30
Lycanthrope, Greater Seawolf - 9, Sw 27
Merman - 1, Sw 18
Ogre, Merrow - 6, Sw 12
Sahuagin - 12, Sw 24
Selkie - 12, Sw 36
Sirine - 12, Sw 24
Sprite, Nixie - 6, Sw 12
Sprite, Sea - 6, Sw 24
Tako - 3, Sw 9
Triton - Sw 15
Troll, Scrag - 3, Sw 12 [*Both freshwater and saltwater*]
Umber Hulk, Vodyanoi - 3, Sw 6

And the winner as faster swimming species is ... the Selkie! Admittedly, they cheat by turning into seals, but them's the breaks.

EDIT: Oh, and I added the Ixitxachitl despite them not being humanoid, since they're a significant marine race. But if I add one non-humanoid sapient to the list, why not eyes of the deep, takos and all those other nonanthropoid aquatic races. Oh well, I can't have everything. Except I'll add the Takos, just because I think they're cute.

Kakita Kojiro

01-05-2009 07:05 AM

Whoah, that is a lot more than I'd expected. Thanks, **JRM**!

Not quite as wonky as I'd recalled, but still some serious weirdness: everyone swims circles around the ixitxachitl (? , rays are quick swimmers!), sahuagin and seawolves are apparently rocket-propelled, and storm giants are really fast swimmers (D&D apparently ignores drag resistance, also).

It still seems odd that they thought we'd need this many aquatic races. I'd don't even recall seeing any module use, say, mermen anyway.

demiurge1138

01-05-2009 08:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, most modules use sahuagin or kuo-toa for their fishman needs. I only recall seeing two modules ever using locathath. No merfolk.

The Last Conformist

01-05-2009 02:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9800222)
But serpents aren't lizards.

Yes they are. Only not ones who are into autotomy.

Wakshaani

01-05-2009 09:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, Merfolk are a kind of non-starter for aquatic adventures in terms of what's been used for modules and the like, but, on the flipside, this means that A) nobody's every ready for 'em when you use 'em in a campaign and, B) you can pretty much write their culture yourself.

Which can get FUN.

JRM

01-06-2009 02:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9801472)

*Whoah, that is a lot more than I'd expected. Thanks, **JRM**!*

Not quite as wonky as I'd recalled, but still some serious weirdness: everyone swims circles around the ixitxachitl (?), rays are quick swimmers!), sahuagin and seawolves are apparently rocket-propelled, and storm giants are really fast swimmers (D&D apparently ignores drag resistance, also).

It still seems odd that they thought we'd need this many aquatic races. I'd don't even recall seeing any module use, say, mermen anyway.

Don't mention it, old bean.

As for the Storm Giants, they may have more drag but they've got more power to compensate for it. Don't forget that Blue Whales, the largest animal in the sea (and anywhere else on the planet) is also one of the fastest swimmers. Obviously, they are less agile and probably have worse acceleration, but I see no reason Storm Giants can't rival the swim speed of other humanoid aquatic races.

EDIT: Oh, one weird point I forgot to mention. Lacedon's don't have a land speed. Does that mean a marine ghoul that has been pulled up on deck just flops about like a beached fish? I wonder why this is, they'd have had perfectly functional land legs before they became undead. Maybe they've gone all soft and bloated, so can't stand up unsupported by water.

Kakita Kojiro

01-06-2009 09:27 AM

Ah, but blue whales are extremely hydrodynamic, and have that honkin' huge fluke designed specifically to propel them in the water. Very efficient swimming design.

Storm giants, however, are basically really big humans. Humans are terribly inefficient swimmers -- the surface area available to push them forward is extremely limited, *and* humans present more cross-section to *resist* moving forward

-- lots of drag in the water. Basically, storm giants should swim like humans who're stuck in water that has probably eight times more resistance to them moving forward.

Of course, they also shouldn't be able to stand up, what with the square cube law being what it is. So let's just say they wear really, really big flippers, eh?

I would think that the lacedon problem may be that they are waterlogged dead bodies. Corpses in water tend to bloat, lots. They're not fantastic swimmers, but if they're waterlogged they're probably neutrally buoyant. On land, though: *squish, squish*

Bloated corpses are really gross, by the way. I used waterlogged zombies to great effect in a water adventure one time, and managed to squick everyone out with the description.

hmm... Wonder how creepy it would be to use a merman community that *animates dead* on the surface dweller corpses thrown into the sea, and uses them as menial labor (and fish food)? Bet *that* would make a memorable merfolk encounter.

JRM

01-06-2009 10:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9806008)

Ah, but blue whales are extremely hydrodynamic, and have that honkin' huge fluke designed specifically to propel them in the water. Very efficient swimming design.

Storm giants, however, are basically really big humans. Humans are terribly inefficient swimmers -- the surface area available to push them forward is extremely limited, and humans present more cross-section to resist moving forward -- lots of drag in the water. Basically, storm giants should swim like humans who're stuck in water that has probably eight times more resistance to them moving forward.

I know all that, a better way of putting my point is that a blue whale is basically built in an identical fashion to the smaller baleen whales, such as the Minke but is, I believe, faster. The cross section to resist moving forward should scale with surface area, so the resistance ought to be proportional to area, not volume, and animal muscle produces force proportional to surface area as well. Ergo, the swim speed may be roughly independent of size. (Oh, and if I remember my fluid dynamics right the resistance to motion scales up with the cube of the speed, so if they swim 10% faster it's requires $(1.1 \times 1.1 \times 1.1 = 1.331)$ 33.1% more effort.

As for the storm giants, a giant would need to be stronger and tougher per pound than a man-sized humanoid just to walk around as easily as a human, so they may be able to swim faster than a human could.

EDIT: Of course, Storm giants also have supernatural powers, so their swim speed may be augmented by the same innate magic that allows them to *levitate*.

Sleeper

01-06-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9807761)

I know all that, a better way of putting my point is that a blue whale is basically built in an identical fashion to the smaller baleen whales, such as the Minke but is, I believe, faster. The cross section to resist moving forward should scale with surface area, so the resistance ought to be proportional to area, not volume, and animal muscle produces force proportional to surface area as well. Ergo, the swim speed may be roughly independent of size. (Oh, and if I remember my fluid dynamics right the resistance to motion scales up with the cube of the speed, so if they swim 10% faster it's requires $(1.1 \times 1.1 \times 1.1 = 1.331)$ 33.1% more effort.

The maximum effective speed of a sailing vessel is proportional to the square root of the hull length, so ignoring scaling issues, big creatures are faster. Resistance is based on the interaction between the vessel and the waves it generates, and larger vessels generate longer waves. Oversimplifying things, the maximum velocity in knots is roughly 1.34 times the square root of the hull length in feet for a traditional vessel. For a more general calculation that determines general resistance, look up the Froude number. I'm not sure how this applies to submerged objects, which have to worry about three dimensional waves, cavitation, and such.

JRM

01-06-2009 11:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9807882)

The maximum effective speed of a sailing vessel is proportional to the square root of the hull length, so ignoring scaling issues, big creatures are faster. Resistance is based on the interaction between the vessel and the waves it generates, and larger vessels generate longer waves. Oversimplifying things, the maximum velocity in knots is roughly 1.34 times the square root of the hull length in feet for a traditional vessel. For a more general calculation that determines general resistance, look up the Froude number. I'm not sure how this applies to submerged objects, which have to worry about three dimensional waves, cavitation, and such.

I'd think that's probably irrelevant for swimming animals, since it's for surface vessels with conventional rigid hulls.

I remember an old Dragon Magazine article that used that equation, and the resulting letters from nautical buffs pointing out it was a gross oversimplification (IIRC something to do with how it wasn't the maximum performance, but the most efficient speed of a vessel of a given size, and that the wind- and oar-power limitations would be the main factor in restricting a ship from that era anyway.)

noisms

01-06-2009 11:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mimic

Good old Mimics. It's been a while since we've seen one of the old 'screw over too-trusting adventurers' monsters, of which Mimics are probably the best example. They basically operate like glorified sentient fly papers for humanoids - tempting them with something they might like, then making them stick with massively strong glue.

There are a few curiosities in the entry:

- Language - Mimics have their own tongue - a rival for Elven Cat in the rarity stakes? Perhaps not; there probably is *some* use for Mimic language at least.
- Usefulness - Mimics' bodies can be used for a variety of things - *polymorph self* potions, manufacture of perfumes, alchemical processes, and even food for some cultures.
- Alcohol - they hate the stuff and it's about the only thing that can guarantee them letting go of you if they're stuck. Sounds like the ideal excuse for carrying beer around the dungeon.

Sleeper

01-06-2009 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9807948)

I'd think that's probably irrelevant for swimming animals, since it's for surface vessels with conventional rigid hulls.

I remember an old Dragon Magazine article that used that equation, and the resulting letters from nautical buffs pointing out it was a gross oversimplification (IIRC something to do with how it wasn't the maximum performance, but the most efficient speed of a vessel of a given size, and that the wind- and oar-power limitations would be the main factor in restricting a ship from that era anyway.)

Dragon 70. I don't have the issue in front of me, but I thought the problem was that they had screwed up the equation entirely. Rowboats faster than ships of the line or something. But yes, it's not maximum performance. It's the point at which performance really drops off. And only late vessels like packets and clippers would ever approach that speed. But the general principle should hold. Resistance is determined by waves, and the Froude number should apply. If you look at actual examples, most of the really fast fish fall into the big but not huge size category. The blue whale is one of the exceptions; marlins and sailfish and tuna and such are more typical.

Belchion

01-06-2009 11:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9807974)

Alcohol - they hate the stuff and it's about the only thing that can guarantee them letting go of you if they're stuck. Sounds like the ideal excuse for carrying beer around the dungeon.

In that case, I suspect dwarven teenagers being the reason for the existence of Mimics. "Son, why are you carrying beer with you on the patrol?" "Oh, ah, we might meet an enemy we can only free us from with alcohol." Little later, the gods decided to prevent dwarves from further using magic in order to prevent the further creation of such creature.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9808051)

But the general principle should hold. Resistance is determined by waves, and the Froude number should apply. If you look at actual examples, most of the really fast fish fall into the big but not huge size category. The blue whale is one of the exceptions; marlins and sailfish and tuna and such are more typical.

Resistance is not the only factor playing in to human swimming speed. And while comparing sailing vessels and sea creatures may make sense -- they're all streamlined, after all -- it is a very poor comparison for the mechanics of how humans swim. And it would be even worse underwater; humans are faster on the surface.

Anyway. Everyone knows that you don't bring *beer* with you in case of Mimics -- too much water content! Bring hard liquor! Can also be used as Molotov cocktails when necessary.

Sheesh. Kids these days. Probably going into dungeons with listening cones without mesh screens and no ten-foot poles, either. tsk.

JRM

01-07-2009 01:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9807974)

Mimic

I remember back when I saw the Monstrous Manual for the first time. I opened it at random, and it happened to be the mimic entry. My first thought was "boy, **the picture** sucks", then I glanced through the text and read "Common mimics occupy about 150 cubic feet (a 3' x 6' x 8' chest, or a large door frame). Killer mimics occupy about 200 cubic feet" and thought "that's awfully big" - it's the volume of a skip, a dumpster or a small room!

Common mimics occupy the same 150 cubic feet in the **3rd edition MM**, their description also quotes 5 feet by 5 feet by 6 feet as typical dimensions and adds they weigh about 4,500 pounds.

Mimics that big has long been a puzzle to me, I can see it going several ways.

Option #1: Mimics really are that big, but chests you find down dungeon's are a more reasonable size, say 2'x2'x4'. As a result a mimic chest would be suspiciously oversized unless it was in the lair of a giant or somesuch. However, a mimic could easily get around this by becoming both a regular-sized chest and a plinth it is "standing" upon. Come to think of it, that would have the added bonus that the mimic's prospective victims could be *standing on it* when it chooses to attack!

Option #2: Mimics are actually smaller than the Monstrous Compendium says, being the volume of a reasonable sized chest. Say 15 cubic feet for common mimics (enough for the aforementioned 2'x2'x4' chest), 20 cubic feet for killer mimics. If they're flesh is as dense as a typical land animal (~50 lbs per cubic foot), that's still the weight of a bear (750-1000 pounds). This is my preferred solution. A mimic can still make itself bigger just by incorporating vacuoles (air-pockets) in its body.

Option #3: Mimics are really that big, but so are standard-sized dungeon chests. That seems a bit odd. It would help explain why parties rarely carry captured chests to a safe location before opening them if the chests weighed two tons and were too big to fit through the doors! Although it seems excessive to use chests as big as compact cars when they may only contain a few gems and a bag of 50 gp! Furthermore, if the chest is 4-5 feet tall, an average sized adventurer wouldn't be able reach the bottom without using an extended grab or *climbing into the chest* - whereupon there's a good chance they'd trigger a trap inside the chest such as, oh, a glassteel lid slams shut over the chest and the floor slides away to reveal the chute of a giant mincing machine. (Obviously, the Dungeon Keeper would not use steel bars or a lid since the victim(s) could hold onto bars to stop themselves falling into the supply chute for their Dungeonburger franchise, while an opaque lid would deny the characters outside the chest the pleasure of witnessing the fate of its contents.)

Of course, that's assuming the mimic assumes its traditional form of a treasure chest. I love mimics, but have never had them disguise themselves as such an object. Why should I when there are so many other amusing alternatives - a urinal, a bedframe (covered with a mattress), a statue, a crude dugout canoe, et cetera.

JRM

01-07-2009 01:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9808411)

Anyway. Everyone knows that you don't bring beer with you in case of Mimics -- too much water content! Bring hard liquor! Can also be used as Molotov cocktails when necessary.

Sheesh. Kids these days. Probably going into dungeons with listening cones without mesh screens and no ten-foot poles, either. tsk.

Now I'm wondering how alcoholic the "alcohol" required to dissolve mimic glue is. If you can use wine, then experienced adventurers could just bring **really strong** beer. I've got a bottle of Samichlaus waiting for a special occasion that's 14% by alcohol and, in theory, you could brew beer even stronger than that. If you need a really high alcohol content, say 60-90% like some vodkas or Stroh Rum (ghastly stuff the both of them), supplies might be more difficult to acquire with medieval technology.

Wakshaani

01-07-2009 01:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Probably the meanest mimic I ever saw was one disguised as an iron portcullis. It'd clearly been dropped and the chain to the winch on the other side cut, so, all you had to do was grab it and lift it with two or three people.

Who then got stuck because ... hello? Mimic?

And so there you were in a ten foot wide tunnel, your strongest guys unarmed and stuck to a Mimic, and everyone else behind them going, "Uh, crap, didn't see that coming. Uh. Crap. What do we do now?!"

The Last Conformist

01-07-2009 02:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9807761)

As for the storm giants, a giant would need to be stronger and tougher per pound than a man-sized humanoid just to walk around as easily as a human, so they may be able to swim faster than a human could.

Strictly speaking, they don't need to be stronger per pound - it's just that achieving even equal strength per pound is hard, since, for a given efficiency of muscle fibers, muscle weight goes up faster than muscle strength when you scale up (weight goes as the third power of linear size, strength as the second).

Now, assuming our natatorial storm giant to have superefficient muscles that give him human-level strength per pound of body mass, he should be able to swim faster than a human because he can produce equal propulsive power per unit body mass, but the drag force per unit body mass will be less (at a given speed) because the total drag force scales as the second power of linear size.

(Obviously, this is a very simplistic analysis, but I feel fairly confident that considering the details won't overturn the *qualitative* result.)

JRM

01-07-2009 02:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oh, and a few miscellaneous comments.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9807974)

Mimic

*Good old Mimics. It's been a while since we've seen one of the old 'screw over too-trusting adventurers' monsters, of which Mimics are probably the best example. They basically operate like **glorified sentient fly papers** for humanoids tempting them with something they might like, then making them stick with massively strong glue.*

I like the idea of gargantuan monsters using Mimics as a type of pest control. "Honey, adventurers have got in our small change again. Be a dear and lay out some mimics, will you." That would tie in with Mimics being scaled to giant-sized treasure chests, too. There's nothing in "Mimics were originally created by wizards to protect themselves from treasure hunters" that says they were human wizards, maybe they are creations of the Arcane (Mercane), evil Titans or weirder creatures.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9807974)

There are a few curiosities in the entry:

- Language - Mimics have their own tongue - a rival for Elven Cat in the rarity stakes? Perhaps not; there probably is *some* use for Mimic language at least.
- Usefulness - Mimics' bodies can be used for a variety of things - *polymorph self* potions, manufacture of

perfumes, alchemical processes, and even food for some cultures.

- Alcohol - they hate the stuff and it's about the only thing that can guarantee them letting go of you if they're stuck. Sounds like the ideal excuse for carrying beer around the dungeon.

Unless my memory deceives me, mimics usually only spoke Common in 1st edition AD&D (well, why do you think the talking variety are called Common Mimics, eh? ;)) and I like that notion better than them having a language all of their own. The 2E Mimic entry says the mimic language uses "corruptions of the original language spoken by their wizard creators", which mean the DM may have to decide who created them in order to determine their language.

Although it could be used as a adventure hook - the mimics creators are all long dead, and the players need to learn how to command one of their ancient magical devices to save the day, but the only creatures that can still pronounce their tongue are the mimics, so they have to persuade one to cooperate.

As for all the alchemical and magical uses of mimic bodies and their secretions, maybe that was a deliberate feature built in by their wizard creators. Then they could get some use out of the creatures when they're not eating thieves.

Mr. Teapot

01-07-2009 02:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9807974)
Good old Mimics.

Mimics themselves are great. But they make so many other monsters redundant. Almost any monster that disguises itself as something harmless (of which 2nd ed had lots) could be replaced with a Mimic doing the same thing. Right? I mean, who needs a Lurker Above or a Darkmantle when you could have a Mimic hide as the ceiling or some bit of architecture on the ceiling? Who needs a Trapper or that monster that looks like a bunny and a tree stump when you have a Mimic around?

I imagine that all these second class mimics are really just hyper-specialized mimics. They split off from the "main" branch of mimics a long time ago and evolved into more specific harmless looking forms. Probably Doppelgangers are the sentient/humanoid branch of that family: they are to mimics as humans are to chimpanzees, or something.

So cue up an adventure with some medieval biologist travelling around studying as many mimic wannabe species as you can find between your Monstrous Manuals and Fiend Folios.

Or maybe reverse that: Mimics evolved from Doppelgangers, not vice versa. doppelgangers were once humans, who have been branching off into more monstrous forms (perhaps a race of humanoids who became so skilled in illusions or transmutation that it infused them, but destroyed their culture). Mimics are a stage or two beyond doppelgangers: they have become better at disguising themselves, but in turn become more monstrous as well.

demiurge1138

01-07-2009 03:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

My problem with mimics is really a problem with how they're used. They're always used as chests. There's so many more innovative things for a mimic to disguise itself as.

Vultur10

01-07-2009 03:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I was just thinking earlier today about how a biologist transported to D&D would cope.

I think nothing ever went extinct - and everything kept evolving. Carrion Crawlers are relatives of *Hallucigenia*; most of the Aberrations are probably descended from Cambrian life. (The Mind Flayer is clearly a case of symbiosis between an invertebrate of this lineage and a humanoid.) Dragons and their kin are derived from Permian and Triassic lineages of reptiles and synapsids that became extinct in the real world. Lizardfolk, Troglodytes, etc. are descended from small swamp-living theropod dinosaurs. Dire Animals are the natural result of evolution in a world with predators much nastier than those in reality.

Elves and halflings are related to humans, possibly magically altered subspecies. Dwarves are more distinct and probably from a separate line of higher primates; gnomes are dwarf relatives. Goblins are probably close to human ancestors, maybe *Homo habilis* or *Homo ergaster*. Orcs are Neanderthals that gave up some of their intelligence for a smaller brain, and thus easier birth and a faster breeding rate. Ogres and Hill Giants are Neanderthal-derived as well, but lost intelligence because it was no longer necessary with their brute size and strength. Fire Giants may be related; they seem to have the same heavy build. Frost, Stone, Cloud, and Storm Giants I'm not certain about.

Mr. Teapot

01-07-2009 03:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9808937)

My problem with mimics is really a problem with how they're used. They're always used as chests. There's so many more innovative things for a mimic to disguise itself as.

That's what I'm talking about. If you used a mimic with a little imagination, you wouldn't need all those other monsters.

6inTruder

01-07-2009 04:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9808749)

*Mimics themselves are great. But they make so many other monsters redundant. Almost any monster that disguises itself as something harmless (of which 2nd ed had lots) could be replaced with a Mimic doing the same thing. Right? I mean, who needs a Lurker Above or a Darkmantle when you could have a Mimic hide as the ceiling or some bit of architecture on the ceiling? Who needs a Trapper or **that monster that looks like a bunny and a tree stump** when you have a Mimic around?*

I hope the [Wolf In Sheep's Clothing](#) makes it into the 4ed MM2.

Sleeper

01-07-2009 09:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9808411)

Resistance is not the only factor playing in to human swimming speed. And while comparing sailing vessels and sea creatures may make sense -- they're all streamlined, after all -- it is a very poor comparison for the mechanics of how humans swim. And it would be even worse underwater; humans are faster on the surface.

Of course not; a rigid hull with an external power source (motor, sails) is hard to compare to a fish, where the body itself deforms (carps twist into a C-shape when starting suddenly) and even the flippers have to be flexible (to make minute adjustments to the surface throughout the stroke). But barring hydrocavitation or similar ways of avoiding the issue, you still have to deal with resistance and presumably it scales in the same fashion based on size. I have no idea how to compare a human swimmer with a fish-like monster, but we can at least start to compare a giant human with a regular human.

Beyond the basic scaling of muscle power and resistance with size, I don't know enough about hydrodynamics and the biomechanical adaptations to make any real guesses. A better tool is probably a comparison of observed speeds. I know there have been a few studies that indicate that the running speed of land animals seems to scale with the square root of linear size. I'm not sure if that applies to swimming, but even if it's wrong it probably *feels* about right since we humans do have a terrestrial bias. And that's usually good enough for a game.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9808508)

*I remember back when I saw the Monstrous Manual for the first time. I opened it at random, and it happened to be the mimic entry. My first thought was "boy, **the picture** sucks", then I glanced through the text and read "Common mimics occupy about 150 cubic feet (a 3' x 6' x 8' chest, or a large door frame). Killer mimics occupy about 200 cubic feet" and thought "that's awfully big" - it's the volume of a skip, a dumpster or a small room!*

*Common mimics occupy the same 150 cubic feet in the **3rd edition MM**, their description also quotes 5 feet by 5 feet by 6 feet as typical dimensions and adds they weigh about 4,500 pounds.*

I never noticed that. That is really, really weird. Most mimics are pictured as doors, or mostly *empty* chests with some miscellaneous shiny things at the bottom. Not a wardrobe filled solid with flesh. Assuming a normalish door (say 7 ft x 3 ft x 2 inches), you're only looking at a couple cubic feet (3.5 in this case). Even a huge portal (say 12 ft x 5 ft x 8 in) would be under 50 cubic feet (40). I wouldn't go with more than 10 cubic feet.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9809065)

I was just thinking earlier today about how a biologist transported to D&D would cope.

I think nothing ever went extinct - and everything kept evolving. Carrion Crawlers are relatives of Hallucigenia; most of the Aberrations are probably descended from Cambrian life. (The Mind Flayer is clearly a case of symbiosis between an invertebrate of this lineage and a humanoid.) Dragons and their kin are derived from Permian and Triassic lineages of reptiles and synapsids that became extinct in the real world. Lizardfolk, Troglodytes, etc. are descended from small swamp-living theropod dinosaurs. Dire Animals are the natural result of evolution in a world with predators much nastier than those in reality.

I think what would drive biologists craziest is magical hybridization. Phylogeny is based on a straight line of descent. Yet with magic, you have owls crossed with bears, insects with humans, and even more convoluted monstrosities like the chimera. The tree of life becomes a lattice.

However, it would be a fascinating exercise to try to extrapolate monsters based on early Cambrian or even Ediacaran lifeforms. Or perhaps an invasion by deep sea animals. A world of strange misbegotten things, alien beyond imagining and yet still based on real creatures.

Zartes

01-07-2009 01:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

If mimics hate alcohol, particularly the strong stuff that can dissolve their natural adhesive coating, perhaps there might be an adventure in a mimic (or even a group of them) infiltrating a brewery or winery and trying to destroy it from the inside. Maybe with the help of a local priest with rather strong views on the evils of drink.

sim_james

01-07-2009 04:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

On the subject of making the Mimic language somewhat relevant in a game, I am imagining a Spelljammer campaign in which the PCs meet a ship crewed exclusively by mimics. They'd be neutral rather than rampaging PC-eaters, perhaps a promising trade partner.

It gives you the opportunity to have the PCs negotiate with a room full of talking furniture.

What would a mimic civilisation be like? Do mimics flow frequently from one form to the next, or do they have their own preferences? Can you perhaps infer something about a mimic's personality based on the type of furniture that he prefers to be?

JRM

01-07-2009 06:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9808661)

Strictly speaking, they don't need to be stronger per pound - it's just that achieving even equal strength per pound is hard, since, for a given efficiency of muscle fibers, muscle weight goes up faster than muscle strength when you scale up (weight goes as the third power of linear size, strength as the second).

Oh blast it, that was just a typo. I meant to say stronger per cross-sectional area not per pound, but my fingers didn't know what my mind was thinking (or something like that). They would need to approximate the same strength-per-pound as the smaller creatures to match their performance.

I may have been mixed up by remembering a giant animal's skeletal structure needs to be *tougher* per pound if it has identical proportions to a regular sized creature. (Normally built animals have bones which are proportionally thicker as they enlarge, because the stress they're under is roughly proportional to the animal's mass (i.e. cube-power) but they're ability not to break under it scales to the bones cross-section (i.e. square-power). So, an animal twice as tall will need bones some 2.8 times thicker to move about with the same safety. Unfortunately, you eventually reach a point where the leg-bones are too thick for the animal to move. Fabulous oversized monsters, like giants and dragons, don't usually have enormously thick legs, ergo either their bones are tougher than regular creatures (which would explain why dragonbone is such a desirable material), or they have some innate weight-neutralizing property (natural *levitation*, buoyancy-sacs or whatever.).

JRM

01-07-2009 06:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9808616)

Probably the meanest mimic I ever saw was oen disguised as an iron portculis. It'd clearly been dropped and teh chain to the winch on teh other side cut, so, all you had to do was grab it and lift it with two or three people.

Who then got stuck because ... hello? Mimic?

And so there you were in a ten foot wide tunnel, your strongest guys unarmed and stuck to a Mimic, and everyone else behind them going, "Uh, crap, didn't see that coming. Uh. Crap. What do we do now?!"

Oh that's an evil idea. I heartily approve! It does not really accord with my conception of the Mimic's shape-changing powers, I always imagined them as being restricted to a single mass without much in the way of holes in it, and a portcullis has so many perforations, but I'm sure I can rationalize that away...

Hmm, obviously the main body of the mimic is the archway, which is thick enough to comfortably contain the mimic's brain(s) and other vital organs. The portcullis and chains are pseudopods the mimic has extruded across itself and then changed to assume the appearance of rusty iron.

JRM

01-07-2009 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9808749)

Mimics themselves are great. But they make so many other monsters redundant. Almost any monster that disguises itself as something harmless (of which 2nd ed had lots) could be replaced with a Mimic doing the same thing. Right? I mean, who needs a Lurker Above or a Darkmantle when you could have a Mimic hide as the ceiling or some bit of architecture on the ceiling? Who needs a Trapper or that monster that looks like a bunny and a tree stump when you have a Mimic around?

Well some of those monsters have abilities mimics don't (e.g. Lurker Aboves and Darkmantles can fly), but I agree in principle. Trappers, Forest Trappers and Wolf-in-Sheeps-Clothing don't bring anything to the table that a Mimic doesn't - well, except for the latter's furry glove puppet.

Would it help to think of it as an example of convergent evolution? Maybe in D&D-World adventurers are such an abundant food source that there are a lot of predator species occupying the "pretend to be scenery and eat passing treasure seekers" niche.
:)

JRM

01-07-2009 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9808937)

My problem with mimics is really a problem with how they're used. They're always used as chests. There's so many more innovative things for a mimic to disguise itself as.

I agree entirely, that's why I prefer alternative forms, as I said earlier:

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9808508)

Of course, that's is assuming the mimic assumes its traditional form of a treasure chest. I love mimics, but have never had them disguise themselves as such an object. Why should I when there are so many other amusing alternatives - a urinal, a bedframe (covered with a mattress), a statue, a crude dugout canoe, et cetera.

Oh, and I'm definitely adding portcullis to that list, I'll be sure to tell my players to thank Wakshaani!:D

DMH

01-07-2009 08:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9810237)

I think what would drive biologists craziest is magical hybridization. Phylogeny is based on a straight line of descent. Yet with magic, you have owls crossed with bears, insects with humans, and even more convoluted monstrosities like

the chimera. The tree of life becomes a lattice.

Which is sort of like the real world. The fusion of organisms has been known for at least a few decades. Lichens and mitochondria are the two that get the most attention, but there are others like mycorrhiza and gut flora.

Symbiosis is something that should be used more in games.

Sleeper

01-07-2009 08:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9811686)

Which is sort of like the real world. The fusion of organisms has been known for at least a few decades. Lichens and mitochondria are the two that get the most attention, but there are others like mycorrhiza and gut flora.

Symbiosis is something that should be used more in games.

Now that would be fascinating. An owl bear is not just a bear that grew an owl's head. It's a bear's body, with an actual owl's head. The two are separate organisms, in a symbiotic relationship. And since it's a fantasy world, perhaps the head of a slain owlbear can pull out tiny vestigial claws and jump off and then run through the woods, looking for a newly headless bear to fuse with. Are normal animals sometimes born with detachable heads? Does it require the right magical conditions, like the witch's hour on the equinox in the shadow of a gibbet? Do the heads of a chimera sometimes split up and run around on their own, while their body rests?

Studying taxonomy might require a San check.

kelvingreen

01-07-2009 08:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9811256)

I am imagining a Spelljammer campaign in which the PCs meet a ship crewed exclusively by mimics.

"Crewed"? Surely the ship itself would be an oversized mimic!

Sleeper

01-07-2009 08:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9811728)
"Crewed"? Surely the ship itself would be an oversized mimic!

Better yet, a composite mimic. A race that can shape itself into inanimate objects might never learn how to use tools. Instead they must either spend part of their life in some strange twist on the concept of feudal duty, or they have an underclass that perpetually serves an overclass. In either case, the subservient mimics themselves become the tools of the rest of the mimics. As they develop engineering, their designs grow grander. One mimic is fitted into the next, which is fitted into the next. And mimic by mimic, they build simple huts, then walls, then grand cathedrals. Wheels and carts, then boats, then whole ships.

The bowhead sings to itself, the deck whispers gossip from plank to plank, the bed gently hugs. That would explain their own language. If they spend most of their life immobile in a communal environment, they'd naturally develop a great oral culture. If a fireball takes out the rigging, the oars might start crying with grief and rage. A hole in the hull? The ship would shift and change and reengineer itself with much jostling and squabbling, filling in the holes.

They could even transform, perhaps not quickly but overnight, with many whines and complaints from those who have become accustomed to their old shapes as they scrabble over each other into their new places. The ship disassembles, and under the direction of the mates becomes a series of wagons and carts as the merchant vessel becomes a caravan. Each shape or form might be a separate skill or profession, and the ship's master has to fit the right mimic to the right new position. One mimic might know how to lead the ship as the bowhead, or become stiff and perfectly round as a wheel and not burn from the friction. Another might just be a series of planks in the wall, but known for discretion and so chosen to hang in the room where confidential meetings are held.

DMH

01-07-2009 08:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9811721)

Now that would be fascinating. An owl bear is not just a bear that grew an owl's head. It's a bear's body, with an actual owl's head. The two are separate organisms, in a symbiotic relationship. And since it's a fantasy world, perhaps the head of a slain owlbear can pull out tiny vestigial claws and jump off and then run through the woods, looking for a newly headless bear to fuse with. Are normal animals sometimes born with detachable heads? Does it require the right magical conditions, like the witch's hour on the equinox in the shadow of a gibbet? Do the heads of a chimera sometimes split up and run around on their own, while their body rests?

Studying taxonomy might require a San check.

Heh. When I create aggregates for Mutant Future, I usually have them act as one (like Bob the chimera or the scaled hog), but to actually give them the ability to separate- now that is gold.

Thanks for the idea!

Wakshaani

01-07-2009 09:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 9810993)

If mimics hate alcohol, particularly the strong stuff that can dissolve their natural adhesive coating, perhaps there might be an adventure in a mimic (or even a group of them) infiltrating a brewery or winery and trying to destroy it from the inside. Maybe with the help of a local priest with rather strong views on the evils of drink.

Sadly, I wasn't around for teh other two threads, so I missed a few BIG ones.

This reminds me of how I missed Dwarf, which makes me sad.

One thing I tossed in on Dwarves a while back was that, originally, Dwarves were close to Deep Dwarves, not the portly gruff fellows we all know and love today. Wayyyy back when, they met humans for the first time and started a trade, things mined from underground (Iron, gold, high-quality rock) and mining technique for food, lumber, and alcohol. Dwarves had something *vaguely* similar, using moss, but it was pretty awful. Humans, however, lived up top, where sunlight could grow things, like hops and barley, and introduced Dwarves to real beer. In no time at all, it spread like wildfire, turning into a major scourge for Dwarfkind... weight blew up from good food and beerguts, melencholy kicked off, alcoholic children were born and teh civilization declined. There's a Temperence movement being lead by Dwarven women, now, trying to be the salvation of teh race, but the men are simply too much into drinking now to ever go back. And so, quietly, the once proud and noble Dwarven society is crumbling from within.

Mr. Teapot

01-07-2009 09:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9811418)

Oh that's an evil idea. I heartily approve!

It's from (or found in, at least) the 3.5 update to
White Plume Mountain
where it replaced a different trap in the original module.

Mr. Teapot

01-07-2009 10:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9811256)

What would a mimic civilisation be like? Do mimics flow frequently from one form to the next, or do they have their own preferences? Can you perhaps infer something about a mimic's personality based on the type of furniture that he prefers to be?

You have a couple of different factions/ideologies:

There are mimics who change form all the time, to fit their mood and their current purpose. They think that adaptability is their race's primary trait, and they should embrace this goal wholeheartedly. They tend to be independent, and are the kinds of mimics most often found by adventurers because they're most likely to wander away from mimic society.

There are mimics that try to perfect a single given form. These mimics expect their children to experiment with different forms throughout childhood, but settle on a single form once they reach adulthood. Some branches of mimic society formalize this into a ceremonial ritual, whereby a form is chosen, but for many mimics this is a more casual force of habit thing. The mimic finds that he likes appearing as a statue, so he doesn't bother coming up with something else to look like each morning. While other mimics will recognize him regardless of form, this tends to make it easier for non-mimics to tell a specific mimic apart from other ones. This ideology is more common among Neutral mimics and those who otherwise work alongside non-mimic races. Mimic diplomats, merchants and other roles that require contact with outside societies.

Finally, you have Mimics who have rejected deception altogether. They refuse to modify their form to appear like anything else. Some try to find an ideal Mimic form, which has a mystic meaning for them. Others just prefer to appear as abstract or artistic forms. After all, if you can look like (almost) anything, why restrict yourself to pieces of furniture? Oftentimes, when these mimics are encountered by humanoid races, the humanoid fails to realize that this is a Mimic at all, especially if the Mimic keeps to a single form throughout the encounter. These mimics are rarely encountered in battle, since disguise is a survival trait for mimics and abandoning it is hazardous in battle situations.

Of course, since these are ideologies, there are Mimics who switch between these subcultures and those who blend two or more of these together and all other sorts of complications.

Mr. Teapot

01-07-2009 10:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9810237)

I never noticed that. That is really, really weird. Most mimics are pictured as doors, or mostly empty chests with some miscellaneous shiny things at the bottom. Not a wardrobe filled solid with flesh. Assuming a normalish door (say 7 ft x 3 ft x 2 inches), you're only looking at a couple cubic feet (3.5 in this case). Even a huge portal (say 12 ft x 5 ft x 8 in) would be under 50 cubic feet (40). I wouldn't go with more than 10 cubic feet.

Well, the Mimic might just disguise one side of itself as a door and press up into the doorway. After all, you can't tell how thick a door is until after you open it. So the mimic door could be way thicker than a real door, but by the time you notice this discrepancy, you're busy fighting the horrible abomination.

JRM

01-07-2009 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9811686)

Which is sort of like the real world. The fusion of organisms has been known for at least a few decades. Lichens and mitochondria are the two that get the most attention, but there are others like mycorrhiza and gut flora.

Symbiosis is something that should be used more in games.

I prefer to think magic encourages practically impossible hybridizations. There are whole families of bacteria which can exchange DNA packets to produce children with traits from both parents 'species'. I'm thinking something like this may happen in D&D.

Say, in the case of the manticores a lioness happened to sit on a **scorpion's spermatophore** in the real world the odds of the DNA combining into something viable would be astronomical, as would be the odds that the scorpion sperm could penetrate the lioness's egg - octodecillions and centillion to one, so unlikely it would probably never happen in the history of the Universe. But maybe magical physics reduces those odds to something extremely unlikely, so it happens once every decade or so, and such creatures can breed "true" with their own kind, and some of the time with half-compatible species.

Of course, wizards and the like discovered how to do this, which is why a lot of monsters are credited to the proverbial mad archmagi.

JRM

01-07-2009 10:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9811790)

Better yet, a composite mimic. A race that can shape itself into inanimate objects might never learn how to use tools. Instead they must either spend part of their life in some strange twist on the concept of feudal duty, or they have an underclass that perpetually serves an overclass. In either case, the subservient mimics themselves become the tools of the rest of the mimics. As they develop engineering, their designs grow grander. One mimic is fitted into the next, which is fitted into the next. And mimic by mimic, they build simple huts, then walls, then grand cathedrals. Wheels and carts, then boats, then whole ships.

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There are some nice images there, but why would a civilization of mimics build ships designed to cater to

humanoids? I imagine a ship made by mimics for mimics would resemble some weird living creature. It wouldn't need a ship's wheel, because its rudder/tail moves by itself. Its interior doesn't have staterooms, beds or paintings, just storage spaces and passages large enough for mimics to quickly move from place to place. If the mimics build spelljammers, the heart of each flying ship may be a "helm mimic" with spellcasting powers.

I can see a few explanations for a mimic ship looking like a human vessel.

(a) It is designed for the comfort and convenience of a humanoid crew, either its wizard masters (who may be long dead, but the mimic ship's design is constrained by ancient instinct and genetic programming) or the "thinking class mimic" have human form, possibly being dopplegangers or doppleganger-like as previously mentioned.

(b) It's just another aspect of a mimic's instinctive hunting strategy. A ship come across an apparently abandoned vessel floating adrift, which they sail up to to claim as a prize. Some of the crew go aboard, but horror is unleashed when the door to the Captain's cabin is opened to reveal a wall of living flesh from which an inhuman eye the size of a dinner-plate glares. Sticky pseudopods explode from the planks, the holds gape open into fanged maws and the mimic-vessel's masts turn into tentacles which trap the curious ship in their coils. An hour or two later and the mimic vessel has eaten the other ship, and may be halfway to budding off a small yacht offspring.

JRM

01-07-2009 10:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9811983)
It's from (or found in, at least) the 3.5 update to
White Plume Mountain
where it replaced a different trap in the original module.

Oh thanks Mr Teapot.

I've got that scenario sitting on my harddrive somewhere, but never got around to looking through it, since I've already read the original version and the 2nd Ed sequel.

Kapten

01-07-2009 10:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812090)
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Or, the masters are humanoids. Like some very advanced magical technology, they created mimics. The ones in the dungeons are the remains of their civilisation. Sort of the shoggoths of Lovecraft.

Sleeper

01-07-2009 11:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9812010)

Well, the Mimic might just disguise one side of itself as a door and press up into the doorway. After all, you can't tell how thick a door is until after you open it. So the mimic door could be way thicker than a real door, but by the time you notice this discrepancy, you're busy fighting the horrible abomination.

I thought of that, but it would be kind of weird to come upon a mimic-door from the wrong side. Instead of a nice doorfront with frame, knocker and all the touches you'd see from the front, you have a big organic plug or pustule filling in a doorway. Not bad weird, but definitely different.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812090)

There are some nice images there, but why would a civilization of mimics build ships designed to cater to humanoids? I imagine a ship made by mimics for mimics would resemble some weird living creature. It wouldn't need a ship's wheel, because its rudder/tail moves by itself. Its interior doesn't have staterooms, beds or paintings, just storage spaces and passages large enough for mimics to quickly move from place to place. If the mimics build spelljammers, the heart of each flying ship may be a "helm mimic" with spellcasting powers.

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vessel has eaten the other ship, and maybe halfway to budding off a small yacht offspring.

I try to avoid the "all alien technology is organic and gooey" stereotype. I feel it's tired and overdone. In this particular case, it also doesn't necessarily make a lot of sense. Mimics after all emulate inorganic objects, not plants or animals. And not just any inorganic objects, in particular they seem to emulate *manufactured* objects. Straight lines, circles, other geometric shapes. Instead of curves and bends or ever-repeating fractal patterns.

Which leaves lots of room for riffs. Mimic origins are obviously tied to civilization and the tools it crafted. But were they originally created to emulate objects, or are they from a wild stock that colonized and adapted to urban environments?

Also, the most important element is the facade, not the substance. The door looks real, the chest looks like it works. But unless they can mimic moving parts and fine three-dimensional detail, the locks won't work. The chest may be solid, or even if it opens the hasps might be a kind of flap not a hinge.

Why do they always seem to appear in remote dungeons and other sparsely inhabited areas? How do they propagate? Perhaps the killer mimics are rogues, or a rare stage in the lifestyle of a typical mimic. They go out, mask themselves, hunt, and eat voraciously. But perhaps they are naturally colonial animals. They live together, in great groups. Sharing whispers, dreams, company, chemical cues, warmth. But when they aren't out hunting and eating, they spend the vast majority of their life in a type of dormancy. They hunt outside on the frontiers and wilderness, but where they live most of the time is in cities.

Imagine a house, abandoned. A few oddities. Objects fused to other objects. Hallways that don't go anywhere. A little touch of Escher. But mostly seemingly normal. But it's got this terrible reputation. Cats and small children have vanished. People hear whispers in strange alien tongues. Things seem to shift and move when backs are turned.

That's because it's a mimic hive. Mostly somnolent, and except for a few mistakes they don't hunt where they live. But every piece of wall, of furniture, is a mimic. When they feel the urge to hunt, which is a tiny fraction of their lifespan, they hitch a ride with a wagon or cart or other object, and ride out of the city into the sewers or dungeons or frontiers. Before eventually finding their way home, flush, sated, and sleepy.

A dreaming, living house. And perhaps, if they are discovered, or the land becomes devastated or depopulated, or there is a disease, or any of a hundred of other reasons, they decide to pick up and move the colony. And overnight, to the horror of the neighbors, the house reassembles itself into a ship, or wagons, or other objects. And trundles off. Maybe you can't blame wizards for all those towers that suddenly appear overnight, as if by magic.

Now imagine those vessels or wagons or whatevers. They'd appear to resemble whatever they're mimicking, at least superficially. But there would be pieces where they'd get it wrong, or they'd be lazy, or they'd lack a mimic with the requisite talent, or it's something that can't really be emulated by their bodies. Also, if they're designing it for themselves, they can cut a few corners. Make a few changes. Except for the greeting room where they meet visitors, there might not be any doors or corridors. Afterall, a mimic taking the place of a wall can just move, or become a door. There would be random objects in various places. Mimics resting in a favorite form, when they're not needed elsewhere say as a structural support or part of the hull. And so on.

JRM

01-07-2009 11:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 9812162)

Or, the masters are humanoids. Like some very advanced magical technology, they created mimics. The ones in the dungeons are the remains of their civilisation. Sort of the shoggoths of Lovecraft.

Yes, I've already implied as much in the first bit of option (a), e.g. "It is designed for the comfort and convenience of a humanoid crew, either its wizard masters (who may be long dead, but the mimic ship's design is constrained by ancient instinct and genetic programming)".

Of course, in the case of Shoggoths their original masters were not humanoid. Hmm... maybe Mimic Ships aren't built for humanoids either, with wide hexagonal doors to accommodate the unknown body shape of their long-forgotten masters (no prizes for recognizing the cinematic reference).

JRM

01-08-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812350)

I try to avoid the "all alien technology is organic and gooey" stereotype. I feel it's tired and overdone. In this particular case, it also doesn't necessarily make a lot of sense. Mimics after all emulate inorganic objects, not plants or animals. And not just any inorganic objects, in particular they seem to emulate manufactured objects. Straight lines, circles, other geometric shapes. Instead of curves and bends or ever-repeating fractal patterns.

Well I wasn't thinking they'd look like huge icky Gigeresque aliens, more like a living automaton (apparently) made of metal, stone or wood, the different materials blending together in ways that look nearly impossible to craft (obviously because it wasn't made using Craft skills, they just grew itself that way).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812350)

*Why do they always seem to appear in remote dungeons and other sparsely inhabited areas? How do they propagate? Perhaps the killer mimics are rogues, or a rare stage in the lifestyle of a typical mimic. *snip**

The official answer is Mimics just split off new mimics when they're large enough. One idea I had was that Common and Killer Mimics are the same species, but Killer Mimics have just developed a fault in their wiring. A mimic's brain is probably spread about its body, so if the parts can't communicate properly the mimic becomes stupid (and hence a Killer Mimic), which most often happens when the mimic is oversized (which is why Killer Mimics are bigger than regular ones).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812350)

Imagine a house, abandoned. A few oddities. Objects fused to other objects. Hallways that don't go anywhere. A little touch of Escher. But mostly seemingly normal. But it's got this terrible reputation. Cats and small children have vanished. People hear whispers in strange alien tongues. Things seem to shift and move when backs are turned.

That's because it's a mimic hive. Mostly somnolent, and except for a few mistakes they don't hunt where they live.

There is an official D&D relative of the mimic that masquerades as a house, whose name temporarily escapes me. (I vaguely recall it's some awful pun like House Hunters).

One problem with house- and ship mimics is that, officially, mimics can't cope with sunlight, but that's easily houseruled away.

As for mimic wagons they can't form moving parts, remember. Thus a mimic wagon would either have to climb onto a wagon-frame (or just some ordinary axles and wheels) and spin those with its muscular foot/pseudopods, or do the same with wheels that are actually small, separate mimics (mimic wheels it can throw frisby-style at prey, obviously :D).

Sleeper

01-08-2009 12:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812451)

The official answer is Mimics just split off new mimics when they're large enough.

Oops. Never finished that idea, did I? That's the reason they go out on binge eating runs. Eat food so they can grow enough to spawn. Return home. The big door you walked through easily last week is now short enough that you bang your head, plus there's a new footstool in the middle of the room.

And I tend to look at official" answers as a jumping off point, at best :).

Quote:

One problem with house- and ship mimics is that, officially, mimics can't cope with sunlight, but that's easily houseruled away.

Hmm. Does appear there's a single throw-away line about that in 2E. Don't remember if that was in 1E or 3E. And there's no mechanic so it's a not a rule, it's fluff. House-fluffing away?

Quote:

As for mimic wagons they can't form moving parts, remember. Thus a mimic wagon would either have to climb onto a wagon-frame (or just some ordinary axles and wheels) and spin those with its muscular foot/pseudopods, or do the same with wheels that are actually small, separate mimics (mimic wheels it can throw frisby-style at prey, obviously :D).

Yes, I was imagining wheels and axles as separate mimics. That's why I mentioned they'd have to endure friction. The spinning wheel mimic probably has a skill set focused on creating specialized surfaces to reduce the heat. I didn't think about propulsion, though. They could just steal domestic animals. After all, one of them can just become a living yoke.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812547)

Hmm. Does appear there's a single throw-away line about that in 2E. Don't remember if that was in 1E or 3E. And there's no mechanic so it's not a rule, it's fluff. House-fluffing away?

Dragon Magazine Ecology of the Mimic went into more detail, saying they can live outdoors in heavily shaded areas (If I recall correctly, the article mentions them living in exceptionally dense forests, and one mimic that pretended to be a statue in the proverbial dark alley).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812547)

Yes, I was imagining wheels and axles as separate mimics. That's why I mentioned they'd have to endure friction. The spinning wheel mimic probably has a skill set focused on creating specialized surfaces to reduce the heat. I didn't think about propulsion, though. They could just steal domestic animals. After all, one of them can just become a living yoke.

Well an obvious solution would be the axle-mimic changes the glue-glands to grease-glands. A bit of lubrication works wonders, so I understand. As for using domesticated animals, for some reason I'm imagining a mimic-wagon with enormous hollow wheels with giant space hamsters inside them. That way, the mimics get propulsion and a back up food store, which it can increase by feeding the hamsters with crops harvested from the villages they ravage.

Sleeper

01-08-2009 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812667)

Dragon Magazine Ecology of the Mimic went into more detail, saying they can live outdoors in heavily shaded areas (If I recall correctly, the article mentions them living in exceptionally dense forests, and one mimic that pretended to be a statue in the proverbial dark alley).

Well, this *is* D&D. The basic idea is throw all kinds of bizarre and random crap at the wall, and see what sticks. The cool stuff hangs there and keeps reappearing, and everything else (like all those exception based rules, triaphegs, 99% of everything ever written in an "ecology" article...) just slides down and fades away.

points at mimic cowering in the shadows

"Fade away, fade away!"

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812090)

(b) It's just another aspect of a mimic's instinctive hunting strategy. A ship come across an apparently abandoned vessel floating adrift, which they sail up to to claim as a prize. Some of the crew go aboard, but horror is unleashed when the door to the Captain's cabin is opened to reveal a wall of living flesh from which an inhuman eye the size of a dinner-plate glares. Stick pseudopods explode from the planks, the holds gape open into fanged maws and the mimic-vessel's masts turn into tentacles which trap the curious ship in their coils. An hour or two later and the mimic vessel has eaten the other ship, and maybe halfway to budding off a small yacht offspring.

This.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9812350)

Which leaves lots of room for riffs. Mimic origins are obviously tied to civilization and the tools it crafted. But were they originally created to emulate objects, or are they from a wild stock that colonized and adapted to urban environments?

Or, to go a bit Pratchett, perhaps mimics used to be plain old harmless treasure chests, doors, etc, but with all that magic flying about and seeping in, they became *alive*. Sentience came first, and then the very matter which makes up their bodies became flexible and malleable.

JRM

01-08-2009 07:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9813350)

This.

Thank you kindly. Although you copying that text has just made me notice the typos. That's what I get for typing a stream-of-consciousness and not checking its spelling & grammar. My inner pedant forced me to edit the post to correct them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9813350)

Or, to go a bit Pratchett, perhaps mimics used to be plain old harmless treasure chests, doors, etc, but with all that magic flying about and seeping in, they became alive. Sentience came first, and then the very matter which makes u

their bodies became flexible and malleable.

But then the mimics would have to move about on lots and lots of little legs rather than one huge slug-like foot, which is clearly unconscionable.;

Well, my personal taste is to keep what it says in the official sources (except for where it's clearly absurd and needs to be changed for the sake of the sanity of my campaign worlds), so I'd keep the mimics as shape changing organisms rather than some kind of living doppel-construct.

see

01-08-2009 09:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9801176)

He'd have to deaf as well not to hear the hissing from her hair.:D

Not to mention that she'd find it very difficult to have any intimate relations with her blind beau without him feeling there's something different about her head - I guess she could insist she belongs to an obscure cult which doesn't approve of people touching their heads, but it'd be tricky.

The MM's sentence "Medusae are female humanoids with hair of swarming snakes" does not, in fact, include anything that limits the hair to the head. How good are Brazilian waxes at removing snakes?

see

01-08-2009 10:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812451)

There is an official D&D relative of the mimic that masquerades as a house, whose name temporarily escapes me. (I vaguely recall it's some awful pun like House Hunters).

Yep. Mimic, House Hunter -- Monstrous Compendium Annual, Volume One.

Vultur10

01-08-2009 11:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9814455)

The MM's sentence "Medusae are female humanoids with hair of swarming snakes" does not, in fact, include anything that limits the hair to the head. How good are Brazilian waxes at removing snakes?

.... ouch. I *really* did not need that mental image.

+1 SAN Loss point, if you want it ;)

But seriously, that makes sense ... though, wow. They **are** supposed to mate with humans, and I think that would make the process fatal - unless the medusa can keep the snakes from biting even in those conditions.

sim_james

01-08-2009 09:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9812090)

There are some nice images there, but why would a civilization of mimics build ships designed to cater to humanoids?

Partly because I just like the image of a ship full of intelligent furniture. :D

But in terms of the game reality, I'd develop the artificial-race-created-by-wizards angle. Mimics could conceivably look like a deep pile of leaves or a natural rock formation... but they always seem to pose as crafted objects. I figure that they *have* to do so - perhaps its part of their psychology, or perhaps its an inbred magical limitation... one as ingrained as an Asimovian Law, so that breaking it is simply impossible for the Mimic. The "First Law of Mimicry" forbids it. ;) Even though their creator race has perhaps long since vanished (yeah, shades of shoggoths), these limitations remain.

But yeah... I admit that I simply adore the idea of the PCs meeting the captain of a trading vessel, and coming face to face with an irascible grandfather clock.

noisms

01-08-2009 10:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mind Flayer (Illithid)

Speaking of Spelljammer! Here's everybody's favourite Cthulu-esque race of inter-sphere psychotic octopus-headed brain-eaters.

As with the other iconic D&D races it's hard to say much about Mind Flayers that hasn't already been said. Everyone reading this, I'm sure, knows exactly how the creatures work and what they like to do. So instead I'll tell you a story.

One time when I was about 13 I was playing in an Underdark-based game. We'd reached about 7th level with pretty much the same characters as we'd had since the beginning, which was a rarity, and we'd grown quite attached to them. One friend had a Paladin who he had legitimately rolled (!) and of whom was inordinately proud.

Events took us to a Kuo-Toa temple which we had to destroy, along with dozens of Derro allies to the fishmen. The

battle must have taken about four or five hours to work through and was a huge, climactic affair with spells going off everywhere and mass slaughter of evil humanoids. Finally the dice stopped rolling and we had emerged victorious, though all near to death.

My friend's Paladin then went to investigate a little side chamber off to one side of the main temple. Inside was a Mind Flayer who had been hiding away from the fight. He quickly leapt into action and devoured said Paladin's brain.

That friend fell silent and slumped down in his chair. I don't think I've ever seen anybody look so dejected. He said nothing for the rest of the evening, except for the occasional snuffle. Just before he went home he broke the silence and said, "I'll never play D&D ever again" in so dramatic a way that I think we actually all believed him. It was the single most pained reaction to a character death that I've ever seen.

He was back the next week of course.

demiurge1138

01-09-2009 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ooh, ouch. Illithids do have a way of weaving themselves into interesting D&D tales. I was running a game where the party was using the Underdark as a shortcut to reach civilization, and they come upon an old man with a long beard riding a carriage pulled by magic. They chat pleasantly for a while, and then the old man decides he wants to take with him one of the PCs (this would be a character played by the same guy who wants to play a halfling wereleech and a leprechaun--he was using Leadership to play a pair of halfling acrobat/assassin twins). He charms the twin, then manages to use suggestion to convince the entire rest of the party that the two of them should be allowed to go off together.

The old man was, of course, an illithid in disguise. The party figured that out eight hours later when the suggestions to "go on without her, we'll be fine" wore off.

Cue the party madly racing through the Underdark trying to catch the carriage before the halfling got her brains eaten. Which ended with the most bizarre Mexican standoff I've ever seen--the paladin readying a charge with his holy lance, the illithid wrapping its tentacles around the halfling's head, ready to eat her brain. Negotiations broke down and the illithid won initiative. And then survived its lance wound to plane shift away, leaving a debrained halfling behind.

They never caught up to him.

Wakboth

01-09-2009 02:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

You know, I've neither used nor encountered very many illithids, despite their iconic and interesting status. Maybe it was because our dungeon trips generally took place pretty close to the surface?

Also, I've always loved the githyanki-githzerai-illithid -dynamic. In a Planescape game I was in once, the only thing that the 'yankis and 'zerais fully agreed about was that thou shalt not let an illithid live.

Also also, illithids with their diet of brains are among the most ecologically bizarre and unsustainable critters in D&D. With dragons, it's easy to handwave their food requirements (especially as they're pretty voraciously omnivorous), but brains are harder to come about...

kelvingreen

01-09-2009 03:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9817169)

Also also, illithids with their diet of brains are among the most ecologically bizarre and unsustainable critters in D&D. With dragons, it's easy to handwave their food requirements (especially as they're pretty voraciously omnivorous), but brains are harder to come about...

Don't they have a pretty firmly established history of slave ownership and treating sentient beings as cattle? That was where I's always assumed the mind flayers got their supply of brainfoods. I'd imagine that there's also a lot of variety in there; the brains of higher humanoids might be a speciality, but there's the "junk food" of animal brains, and a sperm whale's brain for the illithid equivalent of the Christmas meal. And of course, the richest mind flayers dine out at exclusive Underdark eateries where Celestial brains are a delicacy... for those who can afford them.

Herrison

01-09-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9817169)

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[Relevant-ish comic](#)

They do sustain themselves on minds as well as brains, yes?

Me, I love some mind flayers. I don't suppose anyone knows how they were invented?

demiurge1138

01-09-2009 04:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hurtfulpotato (Post 9817425)

Me, I love some mind flayers. I don't suppose anyone knows how they were invented?

If memory serves me right, Gary Gygax said they were made up from whole cloth, inspired by the cover illustration of Brian Lumley's *The Burrowers Beneath*.

As for illithid ecology, the Illithiad (2e) and Lords of Madness (3e) explained that a mind flayer can actually live off of a diet of mostly lichen-based nutrient gruel. Brains are only required at a rate of one a month or so, but most illithids would prefer more of them. Thus, illithid culture contains performance eaters, specialist entertainers who publicly eat a human brain and project the sensation to a gathered crowd of mind flayers.

I've noticed that mind flayers have been slowly creeping into the public consciousness, although this could be a side effect of Cthulhu's rise in popularity in the new millennium. Davy Jones from the Pirates of the Caribbean movies has the look, and kills somebody by drilling into his brain with tentacles in the third movie, and Doctor Who has the Ood, which are a hive-mind race with lots of face tentacles.

JRM

01-09-2009 06:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9814806)

Quote:

Originally Posted by see (Post 9814455)

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.... ouch. I really did not need that mental image.

+1 SAN Loss point, if you want it ;)

*But seriously, that makes sense ... though, wow. They **are** supposed to mate with humans, and I think that would make the process fatal - unless the medusa can keep the snakes from biting even in those conditions.*

Well I can think of a way around that problem, although the medusa's wannabe lover would get some very funny looks from the leather/rubber crafter he asks to fashion it.:eek:

JRM

01-09-2009 06:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9817169)

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I'm with you there Wakboth, I like the idea of Illithids but have never used one in game, except for once (or was it twice?) when the PCs had social encounters with them. Mostly it's the "four attacks, which if any one hits will kill the target next round" combined with their astronomical magic resistance and stunning psionic blast. They're a Total-Party-Kill waiting to happen if you've got a small group of low to mid level player characters like I usually ran.

As for their diet, one idea I had was mind flayers also ate regular food, but they needed to eat brains to sustain their psionic powers.

YojimboC

01-09-2009 06:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I could give two shits about mimics, but mind flayers... aw, man, mind flayers are awesome. And I hate psionics! But I love illithid.

I've used them a number of times. In 2E, I had the pcs stumble across a mind flayer colony. The players didn't really get it when the Drizzt-inspired drow ranger (standard issue in those days) peeled on out of the situation with best possible haste. Still, being the big softie I was then, none of the pcs died ignoble deaths at the tentacles of the mind flayers.

Used them twice (so far) in 3E. Once in a pirate campaign, where the mind flayer was the most civilized and urbane fellow at the table, and really Not Interested in Getting Involved with the pc's shenanigans. One of the joys of DMing is getting to roleplay things like acerbic mind flayer ambassadors who aren't there just to eat your brain. (Come to think of it, how did those negotiations with the pirate queen go... I should do something with that.)

Last time I got to use one, the player was running a psionic character. I wanted to give him a cool crystal spear that would boost his psionic abilities (despite hating psionics, I like to try to do nice things for my players) so I managed to separate him from the party and lead him into a cavern where a mind flayer guarded the spear. One failed initiative roll later, the mind flayer was very full and the player character had an empty skull. So much for being a nice guy.

Wakshaani

01-09-2009 10:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oh Mind Flayers, how *useful* you are!

They're so iconic that hints of their presence, or coy sightings, can send an entire gaming table into paranoia. They also have the feel of Eldest Culture, giving you something that redates the Kuatoa-Aarocka-Bullywug-Lizardmen dynasty (Which in turn predates Elves, Dragons, and Dwarves, which in TURN predates humanity!) ... pretty much the oldest race outside of Yellow Mold, and that's saying something.

It gets better.

As time rolled on, it was revealed that Mind Flayers were a symbiotic creature and that TRUE illithids were little tadpole-sized earthworm-like critters that, when young, would get inserted into a humanoid's head, transforming them into a Mind Flayer over a period of time. This gives you a HUGE plot hook, from having 'neutered' Mind Flayers that can be inserted into a creature, which is then enslaved to the worm inside but undergoes no physical

metamorphosis, thus giving you great spy networks, to having them infiltrate other beings, thus giving rise to Flayer variants. You **also** get a neat tie-in with other Abberations, as they can be 'wild' Illithids who grew up fully or were mutated into new forms (Such as 3.5 edition's Grick) that still have roots in the old world.

Which is way cooler than just being aliens.

Bonus if you use Eldest Gods, forces of pure Chaos that were locked away an eternity ago and that teh Flayers would love to release, but have never learned how. Teh stars have to be aligned **just** right and, until their patrons are freed, the Flayers have no Clerics and they're hardly going to follow some **lesser** god!

And that's just for STARTERS.

Sleeper

01-09-2009 12:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9818767)

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I've always liked aboleths, and figured they're pretty much the oldest civilization. The first that appeared, after *Tiktaalik* crawled up out of the primordial seas. They're an old race now, obdurate and inflexible. But somewhere back there, somehow, they figured out a way to keep up. To change themselves. To become something new. They took larval aboleth, and transmogrified them. Turned them into tadpoles, made them into parasites. Inserted them into one of the new vibrant races, and made a hybrid. See, illithids are old. Old beyond reckoning. But aboleth? They created the illithid from themselves, when they first started to worry about getting old and out of date. When they were already the feeling the pangs of senescence.

The originals still survive. Still breed new illithids. But most of the energy, the action, is in the new races. In the new hybrbids. Illithids have been half-breeds, primordial soup mixed with the latest apex species, since before the written word. Every race, going all the way back as far as any oral stories even hint, had tadpoles inserted in their brains, and spawned their own breed of illithid. If you look at the oldest stories, the illithid were *different*. They once inserted themselves into aarocraka, bullywugs, elves.... and the ones we know are just the latest iteration.

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9817405)

Don't they have a pretty firmly established history of slave ownership and treating sentient beings as cattle? That was where I's always assumed the mind flayers got their supply of brainfoods. I'd imagine that there's also a lot of variety in there; the brains of higher humanoids might be a speciality, but there's the "junk food" of animal brains, and a sperm whale's brain for the illithid equivalent of the Christmas meal. And of course, the richest mind flayers dine out at exclusive Underdark eateries where Celestial brains are a delicacy... for those who can afford them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9817971)

As for their diet, one idea I had was mind flayers also ate regular food, but they needed to eat brains to sustain their psionic powers.

I've seen the idea that they need a brain periodically not for nutrition but to replenish their psionic powers before, and I think it's the best fit.

Though I also like a version similar to Hambly's Darwath Trilogy.

Where the Dark keep herds of feral, subhuman, unintelligent, albino humans bred for a thousand generations, in vast underground caves. The humans on the surface have forgotten their ancestors who were herded underground, except in legends, but they still have an ancestral memory and fear the great stairs leading miles into the earth. Except, one day climate change happens. The lichen on which the herds of subhumans live start to die. And the Dark return, to replenish their food supply. The weird magical dungeons and keeps lined with traps and filled with magic? Those were built by our ancestors, thousands of years ago to save the few fleeting remnants of humanity from the disaster. Very adaptable into an illithid apocalypse :).

JRM

01-09-2009 06:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9819074)

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Oh, the idea of illithids breeding humanoids like cattle has a long pedigree (if you'll forgive the expression), and is a good one. Although they probably want to breed them for tasty intelligence, which a likely source of their problems with the ancestral gith. They were too assured of their superiority to realize the risk of giving their livestock the wit to rebel against their condition.

As for the Barbara Hambly comparison, definitely! She's one of my favourite present-day authors. Of course the Dark were a little different since they didn't eat brains alone - they ate minds, leaving a witless but still living body, or drained all their victim's life force to leave a dry husk, or dissolved all their humanoid victim's flesh away. Curiously, in the books they only do one of the three, which seems a bit wasteful - why eat a fellow's mind and leave their life-force and flesh to waste? Maybe it's part of a process, which can only succeed once against any given humanoid - the mindless ones were only partially affected (e.g. they were "lucky" enough to made a saving throw against energy-drain but not mind-drain:()), as were the lifeless husks, only those that were completely dissolved failed both saves. Once part-drained, there may not be enough left of whatever the Dark sucked out for them to get a grip on, or the return is just not worth the effort.

Inyssius

01-09-2009 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9819074)

I've seen the idea that they need a brain periodically not for nutrition but to replenish their psionic powers before, and I think it's the best fit.

I've seen these ideas merged; they eat grey matter to keep their psionic powers sharp, and they use their psionic powers to convince the universe that they don't actually need to eat anything else.

And I like the aboleth thing, but I'm partial to more of a Dalek / Cybermen situation. Sure, they're awfully similar, but not related; if they meet, alliances will be discussed but then rejected in favor of mind-shattering insults and a medium-scale but very high-powered planar war.

Wakshaani

01-09-2009 09:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

They're wine snobs.

They can **live** off of basic nutrients, and have managed to create several filling, if bland, lichen-based foodtypes (Mmm, Mycanoid proteins!), but, a good brain? Oh, that's just **delicious**.

Sleeper

01-09-2009 10:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9819758)

As for the Barbara Hambly comparison, definitely! She's one of my favourite present-day authors. Of course the Dark were a little different since they didn't eat brains alone - they ate minds, leaving a witless but still living body, or drained all their victim's life force to leave a dry husk, or dissolved all their humanoid victim's flesh away. Curiously, in the books they only do one of the three, which seems a bit wasteful - why eat a fellow's mind and leave their life-force and flesh to waste? Maybe it's part of a process, which can only succeed once against any given humanoid - the mindless ones were only partially affected (e.g. they were "lucky" enough to make a saving throw against energy-drain but not mind-drain:()), as were the lifeless husks, only those that were completely dissolved failed both saves. Once part-drained, there may not be enough left of whatever the Dark sucked out for them to get a grip on, or the return is just not worth the effort.

Hambly deliberately left a lot of things very unclear. Even after *Armies of Daylight*, which explained a lot, there were many aspects that were just mysterious or unknown. The same basic theme — that the enemy is alien and fundamentally unknowable — shows up later in *Mother of Winter* or for that matter in the *Dragonsbane* series. I never thought about it while I was reading the books since their approaches are vastly different, but that basic theme is very similar to one of Lovecraft's favorites.

JRM

01-09-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9819785)

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Do you mean mind-shattering insults such as:

Aboleth Ambassador: "You are an inefficient species. Aboleths do not genetically engineer themselves for aesthetics."

Illithid Ambassador: (looks aboleth up and down) "Clearly"

That was the most groan-worthy dialogue in Doctor Who's **Doomsday** episode, I'm almost sorry they didn't stuff some puns in there as well.

Sleeper

01-09-2009 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9819785)

And I like the aboleth thing, but I'm partial to more of a Dalek / Cybermen situation. Sure, they're awfully similar, but not related; if they meet, alliances will be discussed but then rejected in favor of mind-shattering insults and a medium-scale but very high-powered planar war.

That can be interesting, but the aboleth-begotten illithid also open up a lot of dramatic possibilities. The hip kids vs. old and out of touch parents dynamic. Do the illithid choose their own host race for their new spawnlings, or do they still have to rely on the aboleth to create and implant them? Have they broken free, and mostly ignore the aboleth, or are they still beholden to them? Do they have *War of the Roses*-style familial fights?

It would also be interesting to merge this with the idea from *Lords of Madness*: Illithids are refugees, who fled back into time to escape the end of the universe. Perhaps in this universe, the aboleth haven't created them... yet. So they watch, study. Observe these strangely familiar new creatures. Watch how quickly they adapt, see the advanced and alien powers they display. The aboleth capture specimens. Study them. Figure out what's going on. That these... *things*... are part them. They learn that the illithid were born from their own future bioengineered selves.

That won't do. They won't be eclipsed. So the aboleths send an ambassador to the humans, explaining what

happened. Offering support, aid. Will the humans trust them? Can they afford not to? The first shots in a grand war start, pitting the far future against the present and the distant past. Shadowy figures on both sides, the original illithid and the new ones born in this era, their thralls; and against them the races of the light, and their shadowy advisors and supporters.

And since the illithids only deign to host themselves in the dominant species, well, any new illithids born in this era are probably human hybrids. But what about the original illithids, the ones who rode the vast ships back from the end of the universe? What if they're... *different*? What race were they based on? What species was the dominant race in the far future from which they came?

JRM

01-10-2009 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9820469)

And since the illithids only deign to host themselves in the dominant species, well, any new illithids born in this era are probably human hybrids. But what about the original illithids, the ones who rode the vast ships back from the end of the universe? What if they're... different? What race were they based on? What species was the dominant race in the far future from which they came?

For a while I fooled around with the idea that Illithids were like HP Lovecraft's **Great Race of Yith** - disembodied intellect that possessed organic bodies. They just preferred to use artificial bodies, of which the familiar mauve squid-heads were just the design most commonly encountered by humans - indeed, they were designed for interaction with humans. They had other bodies for other purposes, such as Beholder-like forms for war (or actual mindless beholders, hibernating on racks in their armories until the call for battle?)

Oh, and here's another thing. The MM text says mind flayers are amphibians, but how come we never hear of adult illithids swimming about? Now I'm visualizing a party travelling along the shore of a subterranean lake, when an illithid and its albino cave-locathah slaves stride out of the water.

demiurge1138

01-10-2009 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The illithids-of-the-far-future idea actually plays well with what seems on the surface as one of the worst ideas in the Complete Psionic splatbook (which is saying something). In Complete Psionic, there's a number of "illithid heritage" feats, demonstrating one's descent from illithids. They grant extra psionic powers known, resistance to mind-influencing abilities, even tentacle attacks. They have their own prestige class.

On the surface, that's a terrible idea. Illithids don't crossbreed with other races. They don't even reproduce in the ordinary way--they just stuff a tadpole in someone's ear and call it a day.

But what if the Illithid Heritage feats don't represent descent from illithids?

They represent *ascent* to illithids.

The psions finding themselves with illithid heritage feats are slowly evolving into the true illithids, the ones that will rule the universe at the end of time. And they're starting to find each other. And make plans.

sim_james

01-10-2009 10:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Nice. I'll have to use that in some way!

JDeMobray

01-11-2009 12:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In my long running 2nd Edition Spelljammer campaign, the Illithid eventually ended up on the "good guys" side. Not actually good, mind you, but smart enough to realize that there were more advantages to allying with the Imperial Navy and the human nations during the Second Unhuman War in exchange for treaties and official recognition. The PCs were instrumental in bringing this alliance together, even though it did basically turn the dwarven forces in space. . . not hostile but certainly adversarial. A later group of PCs (mostly the same players, but a few different faces) got to reap the benefits of that alliance during a huge invasion by an empire from outside of known space. Over time, players got used to encountering a few actually honorable and trustworthy Illithid here and there, but mostly they were still the same duplicitous, backstabbing brain-eaters. They just happened to be on "our side".

I ran the Illithid as being vaguely contemptuous of the Mind Flayers, a distinction that they made between the organized, empirical nation-state types in space and the solitary underground types.

Vultur10

01-11-2009 01:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What about this: if an illithid lives long enough (probably thousands of years at least), its inhuman part will try to separate from its humanoid form. Most die in the process, but the rare freak that survives 'ascends' and becomes a formless nightmare with immense power.

demiurge1138

01-11-2009 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9824559)

What about this: if an illithid lives long enough (probably thousands of years at least), its inhuman part will try to separate from its humanoid form. Most die in the process, but the rare freak that survives 'ascends' and becomes a formless nightmare with immense power.

You mean Elder Brains? That would explain how they get started.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9824676)
You mean Elder Brains? That would explain how they get started.

Nah, Elder Brains are integrated into illithid society. I'm thinking that they become something alien even to the illithids - and *really* powerful. Basically Great Old Ones. Maybe only one in many million illithids lives long enough, and most of those don't survive - but every thousand years or so, a new one is born. Maybe a quest to kill the thing before it 'transcends'? The 'transcendence' would cause a backlash of insanity over the whole area, maybe many miles around, random illusions activating, Wisdom damage for everyone.

noisms

01-11-2009 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Minotaur

We seem to have been discussing a lot of ancient mythology recently from various corners of the globe. He's more fuel for the fire.

As with the Medusa, the Minotaur entry sticks *reasonably* close to the legendary version, but 'Dnd-izes' it through attributing Minotaurs' labyrinth lairs to evil archmages, and giving them small maze-dwelling communities. It also attributes their creation to a curse, rather than a goddess being shagged by a bull - bestiality presumably being deemed on the wrong side of a certain line...

Nevertheless I like the fact that the D&D designers retained the 'Monstrous' nature of the Minotaur and resisted turning it into Just Another Humanoid Bad Guy Race. As a general rule in 2nd edition AD&D there are too many mook creatures to beat up and too few genuine Terrors, and while I don't think the Minotaur is Terrifying enough, at least it didn't end up being basically an ogre, but with horns. (Of course, *Dragonlance* screwed that up, but we won't go there.)

There are the smattering of odd rules in this entry that we have come to expect - Minotaur's have a flat 50% chance of tracking through scent, and have 13+3 Morale (but not 16). Also notable is their STR of 18 or 18⁵⁰; another reminder of the ability score escalation that happened after 2nd edition - I very much doubt 3e or 4e Minotaurs have a STR of 18. But it's also unusual that it would be technically possible to create a character in 2nd edition with the STR of a Minotaur - a 7 1/2 foot tall bull-headed beast. So in hindsight perhaps the STR escalation wasn't a bad thing.

Wakboth

01-11-2009 11:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The minotaur morale struck me as odd when I read that monster entry. Why on Earth is it 13 (+3 in combat), and not 16? Did the game ever use the morale score for anything outside of combat?

The artwork's not too good, I'm afraid. There's an (IMO better) DiTerlizzi minotaur at the back of the MM, on page 384.

Standard 3.5 minotaur, right from the MM, actually only has Str 19, which is a bit odd; they're weaker than ogres. Then again, looking at 2e MM, the ogres seem stronger than minotaurs (although no Str score is stated). :confused:

JRM

01-12-2009 12:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9827121)

Minotaur

I like the bit about minotaurs all being male and perpetuating their kind via intercourse with human females, it fits in nicely with the idea of them being an unnatural, cursed creature. One can only presume that most minotaurs are not the result of love-matches, and the ladies in question would face a very difficult delivery.

The minotaur's 18 strength is quite typical of AD&D. If I remember correctly, 1st edition gave ogres an average of 18 strength and a 12' troll 18/00 Str.

I do approve of some of the Strength-score escalation in 3rd edition, since some of the earlier edition monsters where given strength scores with carry capacities so low I'd wonder how they'd be able to move, let alone fight. That's for those monsters they bothered to give Strength scores at all, which was not very many.

Sleeper

01-12-2009 01:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9827297)

Standard 3.5 minotaur, right from the MM, actually only has Str 19, which is a bit odd; they're weaker than ogres. Then again, looking at 2e MM, the ogres seem stronger than minotaurs (although no Str score is stated). :confused:

Hmm. In 1st edition, it's possible to determine the Strength of minotaurs and ogres based on the extra damage inflicted with weapons (no hit bonus, though both the leader and chieftan attack as 7 HD creatures, which is an effective +2 to hit). The minotaur description is a little ambiguous since they can either wield a large axe (treat as halberd), or a flail (+2 damage). The DMG also explicitly lists ogres as having a Strength 18 (under character abilities).

Minotaur, +2 damage (18?)

Ogre, +2 damage (18)

Ogre leader, +3 damage (18/50 or 18/75, the +2 to hit from HD appears to be separate because +3/+3 isn't from Strength)

Ogre chieftan, +4 damage (18/90)

This changes in a bit in second edition, where a bonus to hit as well as damage is listed (slight change in wording: ogre leaders and chieftans don't just attack *as* 7 HD creatures, they *are* 7 HD creatures; the halberd exception is also retained). Some ogre to hit/damage pairs don't match existing strengths, half-ogres explicitly

do their extra damage due to mass not strength (and PCs roll for a number between 14 and 18/00), while minotaur strength is explicitly called out as "18".

Minotaur, no bonus to hit, +2 damage (18, but why not +1 to hit?)
Ogre +2 to hit, +6 damage (18/99 or 18/00)
Ogre leader, +3 to hit, +6 damage (18/00)
Ogre chieftan, +4 to hit, +6 damage (19 or 18/00)

Third edition spells out everything.

Minotaur, Strength 19 (+4/+4)
Ogre, Strength 21 (+5/+5)

While it's not clear in 1st edition (minotaurs are simply "L"), in 2nd and 3rd edition the ogres are clearly larger (height and/or weight). Overall, a lot of exception-based rules. Second edition's partial attempt to apply PC rules to monsters just confused the issue quite a bit.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9827481)

The minotaur's 18 strength is quite typical of AD&D. If I remember correctly, 1st edition gave ogres an average of 18 strength and a 12' troll 18/00 Str.

Trolls were "9+ ft", and nothing indicates their Strength in the 1E entry though the DMG says "18+".

Kapten

01-12-2009 02:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In a way, I like that a fighter can be as strong as a 10 feet humanoid in older editions. It lends a certain heroic might to him =).

demiurge1138

01-12-2009 03:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It wasn't a goddess: it was an ordinary, mundane woman. Who just happened to be the wife of the King Minos, so could afford to have someone build her a giant cow scaffold that she could use to get close and seduce the bull with.

noisms

01-12-2009 03:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9827894)

It wasn't a goddess: it was an ordinary, mundane woman. Who just happened to be the wife of the King Minos, so could afford to have someone build her a giant cow scaffold that she could use to get close and seduce the bull with.

Wasn't she the daughter of the Sun?

Inyssius

01-12-2009 03:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9827908)
Wasn't she the daughter of the Sun?

And [granddaughter](#) of Oceanus and Tethys, apparently. Huh.

demiurge1138

01-12-2009 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9827952)
And granddaughter of Oceanus and Tethys, apparently. Huh.

Huh indeed. Didn't know that part. I did know that she cursed Minos so that he'd ejaculate serpents and venom if he ever tried to have sex with another woman. There's a spell one doesn't see in D&D.

In other news, I love that the original Minotaur has a name. Asterion. Didn't learn that until relatively recently, but it makes him much more a character than a monster. It's such a nice name, too.

Hellzon

01-12-2009 04:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9827121)
Also notable is their STR of 18 or 18/50; another reminder of the ability score escalation that happened after 2nd edition - I very much doubt 3e or 4e Minotaurs have a STR of 18.

23:ish in 4E. ;) Baphomet priests are STR 22 weaklings.

JRM

01-12-2009 05:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9827561)

Trolls were "9+ ft", and nothing indicates their Strength in the 1E entry though the DMG says "18+".

Curious, I was pretty sure there was an official source somewhere quoting 18/00 for a troll's Strength score. Although, since they did 5-8 damage per claw (i.e. 1d4+4) I'd have thought 18/76-90 would make more sense, since that'd give them +4 damage, unless my memory of AD&D exceptional strength scores is failing me. Again.:{

JRM

01-12-2009 05:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oh, and I quite like that **MM picture of the Minotaur**, there's something about its massive head and lined face that appeals to me. There's certainly many pictures in the Monstrous Manual I think are a lot worse.

Although it does look a bit too much like a stocky bloke with a bull's head mask on.

Hmm, maybe the players will discover the local minotaur was just a half-ogre with a bull's head mask on, a ploy to quell the superstitious peasantry into paying tribute to the Maze Master.

One thing about the Minotaur's MM description puzzles me: "Their fur is brown to black while their body coloring varies as would a normal human's." So, is it just their heads covered with fur, while the rest of their body has naked, human-toned skin? In that case, why is the minotaur in the picture a fairly uniform dark brown, with only a slightly different hue on his head and neck. Does this Minotaur hail from his world's equivalent of Africa?

DMH

01-12-2009 05:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9827481)

I like the bit about minotaurs all being male and perpetuating their kind via intercourse with human females, it fits in nicely with the idea of them being an unnatural, cursed creature.

I wonder why there weren't written like driders. Name a god and give him or her or it the ability to curse human males into minotaurs. Signs of disrespect for the god are obvious- horns, tails, etc.

JasonK

01-12-2009 09:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Minotaurs are another one of those creatures I've never used in a game; they just didn't fit into my conception of the fantasy setting that was D&D, being too tied to a specific non-D&D mythology for me to be happy with them.

That said, I've long wanted to run an Argonautika-era Greek-flavored D&D game, using only monsters that appear in Greek Myth; centaurs, cyclopes, gorgons, harpies, minotaurs, satyrs, etc. (Though these days I might look to Agon before I look to D&D...)

Has anyone else tried that? A tighter, more thematically focused D&D? Especially one based around Greco-Roman myth?

- jasön

Vultur10

01-12-2009 10:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9827984)

Huh indeed. Didn't know that part. I did know that she cursed Minos so that he'd ejaculate serpents and venom if he ever tried to have sex with another woman. There's a spell one doesn't see in D&D.

...wow. I didn't learn *that* part in school. Would you happen to know the source for this?

Wakshaani

01-12-2009 12:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well, since I based WakkaWorld on Earth, I have a mythical Greece section and a few Mediterranean islands for that sort of thing. In particular is the island of Titonne, which is ruled by a Titan, who just sorta creates these sorts of things on a whim. Some days, he enriches his population by making it rain gold. Other days, he's in a foul mood so slays every secondborn son. Whatever strikes him.

So, lots of places to toss out Minotaurs, Harpies, Centaurs, and so on.

demiurge1138

01-12-2009 02:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9829344)

...wow. I didn't learn that part in school. Would you happen to know the source for this?

According to Wikipedia, the [Bibliotheca](#) of the false Apollodorus.

noisms

01-12-2009 08:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9829156)

Minotaurs are another one of those creatures I've never used in a game; they just didn't fit into my conception of the fantasy setting that was D&D, being too tied to a specific non-D&D mythology for me to be happy with them.

That said, I've long wanted to run an Argonautika-era Greek-flavored D&D game, using only monsters that appear in Greek Myth; centaurs, cyclopes, gorgons, harpies, minotaurs, satyrs, etc. (Though these days I might look to Agon before I look to D&D...)

Has anyone else tried that? A tighter, more thematically focused D&D? Especially one based around Greco-Roman myth?

- jasön

No, but with all this talk of medusas and minotaurs you can bet your life I'm going to! ;)

noisms

01-12-2009 08:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9827984)

Huh indeed. Didn't know that part. I did know that she cursed Minos so that he'd ejaculate serpents and venom if he ever tried to have sex with another woman. There's a spell one doesn't see in D&D.

Cause Deadly Ejaculation

4th Level Priest Spell

(Necromancy)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 4

AoE: 1 Human Male

Saving Throw: None.

When this spell is cast, the recipient is stricken with a curse. This causes him to ejaculate serpents and venom if he attempts sexual intercourse with any female other than one individual, specified by the caster. Any other woman who the recipient has sexual relations with will be instantly killed by the deadly ejaculate; no saving throw is permitted, and the woman can only be resurrected by a *Wish* spell.

Casting the spell ages the caster by one year. It can only be cured by a *Wish* spell.

Wakboth

01-12-2009 11:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9829156)

That said, I've long wanted to run an Argonautika-era Greek-flavored D&D game, using only monsters that appear in Greek Myth; centaurs, cyclopes, gorgons, harpies, minotaurs, satyrs, etc. (Though these days I might look to Agon before I look to D&D...)

I've had similar ideas every now and then. There'd also be a sort of fantastic Egypt, with gnoll mercenaries, sphinxes and undead. Lots of undead.

kelvingreen

01-13-2009 02:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9829156)

Has anyone else tried that? A tighter, more thematically focused D&D? Especially one based around Greco-Roman myth?

I've never run such a game, but 2e had one of those green handbooks specifically focused on Greek myth; *Age of Heroes* I think. As far as I can recall, it played the setting fairly straight and didn't overly *D&D*ise it.

3.Xe completely passed me by, as I was out of gaming for most of its existence, but I vaguely remember some third party setting which was heavily inspired by Greek myth, but took it as a basis from which to spin off. I'd like to say that the setting was vaguely post-apocalyptic, in the aftermath of the final war between the Olympians and the Titans, but I can't be sure. Anyway, it was not as "pure" an approach as the 2e supplement above.

Sleeper

01-13-2009 02:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

For an old school take, there's always [Mazes & Minotaurs](#), which is basically an alt-history exercise that asks "what if D&D was originally based on Greek mythology?". For what started as one step from a joke, there's a huge amount of material available, including an OD&D analogue (3-volume set and supplements) and the Revised (AD&D) rules.

Malignant Marionette

01-13-2009 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9827297)

The minotaur morale struck me as odd when I read that monster entry. Why on Earth is it 13 (+3 in combat), and not 16? Did the game ever use the morale score for anything outside of combat?

The morale section say you can roll it when a target is offered a bribe, ordered to use a personal magical item with limited charges, ordered to do some dangerous task and such. I suppose it'd affect that kind of things.

Why? Don't ask me. :p

Sleeper

01-13-2009 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Malignant Marionette (Post 9831893)

The morale section say you can roll it when a target is offered a bribe, ordered to use a personal magical item with limited charges, ordered to do some dangerous task and such. I suppose it'd affect that kind of things.

Why? Don't ask me. :p

Comes from the 1st edition rules for henchmen.

The Butcher

01-13-2009 03:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9827984)

In other news, I love that the original Minotaur has a name. Asterion. Didn't learn that until relatively recently, but it makes him much more a character than a monster. It's such a nice name, too.

Check out a short story called "The House of Asterion" by Jorge Luis Borges.

Mr. Teapot

01-13-2009 03:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9829156)

That said, I've long wanted to run an Argonautika-era Greek-flavored D&D game, using only monsters that appear in Greek Myth; centaurs, cyclopes, gorgons, harpies, minotaurs, satyrs, etc. (Though these days I might look to Agon before I look to D&D...)

I had a halfling thief once who travelled backwards in time to fight in the Trojan War, though this was in middle school, and someone gave the Trojans cannons, so it wasn't exactly historically or mythically accurate.

Similarly, there was a section of the World's Largest Dungeon that consisted almost entirely of Greek mythological monsters. A Hydra, minotaurs, harpies and such. But it was kinda boring (like the WLD as a whole) and had a strangely misplaced rakshasa involved for some reason. And still isn't terribly thematically focused. D&D isn't exactly the place to go for clear focus or historical/mythical accuracy.

JasonK

01-13-2009 04:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9831272)

I've had similar ideas every now and then. There'd also be a sort of fantastic Egypt, with gnoll mercenaries, sphinxes and undead. Lots of undead.

Oooooooh. Yeah, I'm sold on that campaign now. Especially if there were a comparable Persian Empire filled with creatures out of Persian myth. (What the heck creatures *are* out of Persian myth, anyway?)

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9831751)

I've never run such a game, but 2e had one of those green handbooks specifically focused on Greek myth; Age of Heroes I think. As far as I can recall, it played the setting fairly straight and didn't overly D&Dise it.

Oh, hey! Yeah, I remember that one. Never had it, but I seem to recall that there were two similar books - one about Celts and one about Vikings. Those may have been the only 2nd Ed books I never picked up, actually...

- jasön

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9830650)

Cause Deadly Ejaculation

4th Level Priest Spell

(Necromancy)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 4

AoE: 1 Human Male

Saving Throw: None.

When this spell is cast, the recipient is stricken with a curse. This causes him to ejaculate serpents and venom if he attempts sexual intercourse with any female other than one individual, specified by the caster. Any other woman wh the recipient has sexual relations with will be instantly killed by the deadly ejaculate; no saving throw is permitted, and the woman can only be resurrected by a Wish spell.

Casting the spell ages the caster by one year. It can only be cured by a Wish spell.

No you fool, don't you realize there are players out there who'd abuse* such a spell to turn it into a ranged autokill attack against every female adversary they encountered.:eek:

I don't want to ever see a game were a PC meets a gynosphinx or Type V demon, says to his fellow adventurers "I'll deal with this" and then pulls his trousers down.

At least add a save versus poison.

*I guess self-abuse is a more appropriate term for such misuse this spell.:D

Malignant Marionette

01-13-2009 05:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9831958)

Comes from the 1st edition rules for henchmen.

No, I meant why minotaurs are easier to do that stuff on, not why the rule exists. I mean, I don't recall any other monster with an x+y morale value. Not that I really pay attention to that, I bet someone has a huge list of examples now. Right? ;)

kelvingreen

01-13-2009 05:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9832165)

Oh, hey! Yeah, I remember that one. Never had it, but I seem to recall that there were two similar books - one about Celts and one about Vikings. Those may have been the only 2nd Ed books I never picked up, actually...

According to waynesbooks, there were also handbooks for ancient Rome, Charlemagne, the Crusades and Europe in the 1600s. Neat.

cpip

01-13-2009 06:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9832324)

According to waynesbooks, there were also handbooks for ancient Rome, Charlemagne, the Crusades and Europe in the 1600s. Neat.

I have most of them (except Celts, Age of Heroes, and the Crusades) -- they were all surprisingly good for their relatively thin size (standard 2nd Ed splatbook thickness). I never got to use them directly, but mined them for ideas for other campaigns.

Kakita Kojiro

01-13-2009 09:03 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9832165)

Oooooooh. Yeah, I'm sold on that campaign now. Especially if there were a comparable Persian Empire filled with creatures out of Persian myth. (What the heck creatures are out of Persian myth, anyway?)

If we limit it to strictly Persian myth, then not too many. However, Persian myth incorporated earlier myths (e.g., Sumerian), and was in turn incorporated into what would be loosely termed "Arabic" myths. If you then use some standard D&D monsters for their Persian counterparts, you'll probably find a useful number. E.g.:

ahi/azhi: dragon (pick a type)

girtab-lullu: scorpionman (covered earlier!)

homa: griffin

ifrit: genie, dao, djinn, efreet, marid

kaftar: were-hyena or gnoll

karkadann: unicorn

ku-lullu, ku-liltu: merman, mermaid
lamia
lammasu
manticore
shedu
rukh: roc
samandar: phoenix
shahbaz: giant eagle (falcon, actually)
daeva, druj, nasu/nasa, alilim: demons/devils (pick a type)

There are probably others, too. Plus miscellaneous types -- giant fish (dandan or denden, IIRC), intelligent and/or albino babboons, lion-men (urmah-lullu; use wemics, maybe), pegasus, etc. Note that all of this is from old campaign notes, so I do not -- alas! -- have the original sources. :(

JasonK

01-13-2009 10:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9832957)

If we limit it to strictly Persian myth, then not too many. However, Persian myth incorporated earlier myths (e.g., Sumerian), and was in turn incorporated into what would be loosely termed "Arabic" myths. If you then use some standard D&D monsters for their Persian counterparts, you'll probably find a useful number. E.g.:

Ah, fair point. The various children of Tiamat would be fair game, wouldn't they.

Okey. I think I'm [starting a thread](#) for this; see if anyone's interested in doing a little shared worldbuilding. :)

- jasõn

YojimboC

01-14-2009 02:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9832324)

According to waynesbooks, there were also handbooks for [...] Europe in the 1600s. Neat.

A Mighty Fortress. Covered the Thirty Years War and similar holy gunpowder wars period. Good stuff. In fact, my favorite material to ever come out of 2E were any and all of those "greenbooks" that I could find. I wish something more like them had been produced for 3E as well.

noisms

01-14-2009 10:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mist, Crimson Death

I had completely forgotten about the existence of these creatures, who I don't believe I've ever used or encountered in a game. They are cursed with one of the worst pictures in the MM, which might explain why. But they're not really a bad lot as monsters go.

The first thing to note is that there's a heck of a lot of talk about vampires in the entry - with the usual sages and their 'rumours' and 'legends' holding that Crimson Death Mists are either the spirit of an 'undead vampire' (is there another kind?) or the disembodied soul of a creature who has been turned into a vampire. They act like vampires too - roaming around feeding on people and soaking up all of their blood. And thus plot hooks are born - reunite the vampire with his soul! We also have some talk about Crimson Death Mists being exiled evil air elementals, though this is less interesting in my opinion. Of course, this allows a cunning DM to introduce a plot avenue in which the PCs end up helping a Crimson Death Mist regain his position in air elemental society, which is always fun.

There's a nice grotesque twist to Crimson Death Mists in that they gradually turn red from the blood they devour - hence the name - and shower it everywhere as they sustain injuries and die. Pretty over the top, but definitely a fun scene: a CDM rising up from the pile of corpses it's been feeding on, then turning on the brave adventurers and covering them with blood as they hack at it with their magical swords. Similarly, I like the idea of a CDM being stuck, djinn-like, in a bottle, and emerging to general awe and wonder - whereupon it starts eating heads while people run in all directions crying "I thought you were supposed to grant wishes!"

The Last Conformist

01-14-2009 11:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)
'undead vampire' (is there another kind?)

There's the bat kind, I suppose.

demiurge1138

01-15-2009 12:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)
I like the idea of a CDM being stuck, djinn-like, in a bottle, and emerging to general awe and wonder - whereupon it starts eating heads while people run in all directions crying "I thought you were supposed to grant wishes!"

That right there is marvelous. I must use that in a game at some point.

Inyssius

01-15-2009 01:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Hey, looks like this got converted to 4E. It's in Dragon 369, under "Baphomet's Friends". The current name is "the Coflizu", which is interesting if you know how the 4E naming scheme works; I would have expected it to still be called something like "Crimson Death Mist", or possibly three monsters named "Crimson Death Mist", "Crimson Death Storm", and "Crimson Death Exsanguinator". Is there a background behind the name Coflizu?

<http://i58.photobucket.com/albums/g2...us/Coflizu.png>

("Massive swirling clouds of torn flesh and crimson droplets coalesce in areas where demons have been butchered.")

And yes, the djinn thing is super-awesome. I can definitely see *that* showing up in a dragon's lair in one of my games.

Kakita Kojiro

01-15-2009 02:19 AM

"Coflizu"? Good grief, that sounds like a sneeze. Why name a monster something that guarantees the players will be making "gesundheit" jokes all evening? Crimson Death Mist would've been perfectly serviceable.

Inyssius

01-15-2009 02:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Man, Wizards *just can't win* in the naming-monsters arena. First it's all "what kind of a stupid name is 'swordwing'," now it's "'coflizu'? Gesundheit!"

Sleeper

01-15-2009 03:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9840168)

Man, Wizards just can't win in the naming-monsters arena. First it's all "what kind of a stupid name is 'swordwing',' now it's "'coflizu'? Gesundheit!"

Not everyone can be Tolkien. And with a very few exceptions (like M.A.R. Barker), the standard in the gaming industry is low. Very low. But is it too much to ask for names that aren't painfully bad?

We could impose some minimum standards. A naming standards board. Not that it would guarantee high quality names. That's not possible. All we could do is impose a few common sense rules on types of names to avoid. No apostrophes, ever. No use of the letters "q", "z", or "x". "J" is only permissible as the first letter in a word. (No, Mr. Salvatore, we didn't invent these rules specifically to exclude you.) No Germanic gutturals, especially ones that sound like cats hacking up a furball. No puns. No more than two vowels in a row. No names that mean something spelled backwards (that means you're out, Mr. Verne). No homophones of onomatopoeic words that represent bodily functions (*cough*).

I'm sure it would be a smashing, unambiguous success, like the MPAA rating system or the Comics Code.

Epoch

01-15-2009 04:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9828188)

Curious, I was pretty sure there was an official source somewhere quoting 18/00 for a troll's Strength score. Although, since they did 5-8 damage per claw (i.e. 1d4+4) I'd have thought 18/76-90 would make more sense, since that'd give them +4 damage, unless my memory of AD&D exceptional strength scores is failing me. Again.:(

Gauntlets of Ogre Power conferred 18/00 strength on the wearer. That's not exactly definitive, but I always took it to mean that Ogres had 18/00 strength.

6inTruder

01-15-2009 05:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

*The first thing to note is that there's a heck of a lot of talk about vampires in the entry - with the usual sages and their 'rumours' and 'legends' holding that Crimson Death Mists are either the spirit of an **'undead vampire' (is there another kind?)** or the disembodied soul of a creature who has been turned into a vampire.*

Yes.

,:-P~

(un)reason

01-15-2009 09:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

'undead vampire' (is there another kind?)

And let us not forget the Vampyres from Ravenloft. All the blood drinking, without any of the undeadness, and an extra helping of entitlement mentality from never being human in the first place and raised to think of normal humans as just sheep. Man, they came up with a million goofy variants on the same monsters.

Sleeper

01-15-2009 07:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9841861)

And let us not forget the Vampyres from Ravenloft. All the blood drinking, without any of the undeadness, and an extra helping of entitlement mentality from never being human in the first place and raised to think of normal humans as just sheep. Man, they came up with a million goofy variants on the same monsters.

Pseudo-undead were some of the strangest. Clans of humans who by sheer proximity absorb all the base stats of the undead, but none of the special powers. Apparently, a modified form of Batesian mimicry.

Äkräs

01-15-2009 07:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9840386)

All we could do is impose a few common sense rules on types of names to avoid. No apostrophes, ever. No use of the letters "q", "z", or "x". "J" is only permissible as the first letter in a word.

I don't really have anything to add to this particular discussion, so I'll just savor the moment when I found out that I have a name that should be avoided. I think that's a good start for a path that leads to **RULING THE WORLD WITH AN IRON FIST!**

kami2awa

01-15-2009 09:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9841861)

And let us not forget the Vampyres from Ravenloft. All the blood drinking, without any of the undeadness, and an extra helping of entitlement mentality from never being human in the first place and raised to think of normal humans as just sheep. Man, they came up with a million goofy variants on the same monsters.

Apart from the silly name, that's actually very believable; it could fit well into a Hard SF universe - humanoid creatures like this could easily evolve.

Wakboth

01-15-2009 09:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9843529)

Apart from the silly name, that's actually very believable; it could fit well into a Hard SF universe - humanoid creatures like this could easily evolve.

In fact, you might want to check out Peter Watts' *Blindsight*. (Be warned: it's seriously, horribly bleak.)

JRM

01-16-2009 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

Mist, Crimson Death

I had completely forgotten about the existence of these creatures, who I don't believe I've ever used or encountered in a game. They are cursed with one of the worst pictures in the MM, which might explain why. But they're not really a bad lot as monsters go.

Oh heavens yes, I looked at that picture of the Crimson Death a few days ago to see what joys awaited us and actually cringed. It looks like something that should be chasing Scooby Doo and Shaggy through a haunted house, only to be captured and have its mask pulled off to reveal it had been Old Mister Bates all along.

I prefer to call them Crimson Deaths rather than Crimson Death Mists. I have a nasty suspicion they only added the 'Mist' in 2nd edition to give them a tenuous link to the next entry, the Vampiric Mist - obviously AD&D can't be expected to make do with only one blood-sucking cloud of vapour.

I've only used the monster once, back in the days when I was evil enough to regularly use the monsters rolled up on the wilderness encounter table regardless of their strength relative to the PCs. In that case a Crimson Mist turned up and ate one of the party's hirelings and there was sod all they could do about it - they didn't have potent enough magical weapons to injure it before it had sucked the poor fellow dry. Then it just flew away, cackling evilly.

As for other possible game uses for a Crimson Mist, why has nobody mentioned the old chestnut "it isn't a vampire after all!", something the monster seems practically tailor made for.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

Of course, this allows a cunning DM to introduce a plot avenue in which the PCs end up helping a Crimson Death Mist regain his position in air elemental society, which is always fun.

Or a Crimson Mist somehow regained a royal position in air elemental society and plans to give its brethren its taste for blood, so the players have to destroy/re-exile it before the Prime Material is invaded by a bloodthirsty Gaseous Horde.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

Similarly, I like the idea of a CDM being stuck, djinn-like, in a bottle, and emerging to general awe and wonder - whereupon it starts eating heads while people run in all directions crying "I thought you were supposed to grant wishes!"

Now I'm imagining a powerful supernatural evil of some sort, a demon or high-level vampire mage say, that keeps a Crimson Mist imprisoned in a hookah, Deriving malicious delight from inhaling tobacco smoke flavoured with human blood through a captured foe.

YojimboC

01-16-2009 04:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I'm going to clam chowder a bit, because due to some monumental lack of concentration, I missed the minotaur entry.

Anyway, I used to really dig on minotaurs for some reason. They were fairly ubiquitous "strong guy" villains in my games for years. I never used the "cursed men" angle, as I much preferred the Dragonlance Minotaur/Klingons when I was a teen, and even used a minotaur PC (gladiator from the Complete Fighter's Handbook) for a while.

Somewhere along the way after I stopped playing 2E, I gave up on the bullheaded twits, much as I did elves. I did use some skeletal minotaurs as guards for an ancient prison once. They were kind of cool, and they at least nerfed the duelist and deep woods sniper.

Although older and (presumably) wiser, I'm still not all that much a fan of the "cursed human" version of the minotaurs. I prefer them as a straight-up monstrous humanoid race with their own culture. The mock Rome by way of Klingon Dragonlance style minotaurs don't do much for me anymore, though.

The idea of a race of beings who build labyrinths as a sort of nest or domicile either out of some strange compulsion or some kind of cultural thing sounds really neat.

Mr. Teapot

01-16-2009 05:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9839198)

[size="5"]

I had completely forgotten about the existence of these creatures, who I don't believe I've ever used or encountered in a game.

I think that the evil spirit monster we're dealing with in one campaign right now is a Crimson Death Mist, but misremembered by the GM decades after last seeing the 2nd ed MM entry for it. (Or whatever Ravenloft source it originally came from.) It's not the same on specifics, but the thing is a disease that takes the form of a red mist and is intimately connected to blood.

rex monday

01-16-2009 06:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Man, you know what I'd like to use a Crimson Mist for? The breath weapon of a vampire dragon.

JRM

01-17-2009 12:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9845460)

I think that the evil spirit monster we're dealing with in one campaign right now is a Crimson Death Mist, but misremembered by the GM decades after last seeing the 2nd ed MM entry for it. (Or whatever Ravenloft source it originally came from.) It's not the same on specifics, but the thing is a disease that takes the form of a red mist and is intimately connected to blood.

The Crimson Death originated in 1st edition AD&D, debuting in the Monster Manual II. The previously mentioned Vampiric Mist did originate in 2E but, curiously, in the 1993 Monstrous Manual rather than Ravenloft (at least according to [wikipedia's list](#)). However, the 2E Ravenloft Appendix has not one, but three Mist Horrors - the Common, Wandering and Pseudo Mist Horror, they are not bloodsuckers like the Crimson Death or Vampiric Mist.

I can understand the mix up though, when I last read the Vampiric Mist write up I was thinking it was a very Ravenloft-like monster.

Sleeper

01-17-2009 12:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9848924)

I can understand the mix up though, when I last read the Vampiric Mist write up I was thinking it was a very Ravenloft-like monster.

I'd lean more towards the *Masque of Red Death*, what with it being in the title and all.

Or maybe Rocket Raccoon :).
Quote:

Originally Posted by rex monday (Post 9847888)
Man, you know what I'd like to use a Crimson Mist for? The breath weapon of a vampire dragon.

I like.

Thane of Fife

01-17-2009 06:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

The previously mentioned Vampiric Mist did originate in 2E but, curiously, in the 1993 Monstrous Manual rather than Ravenloft (at least according to wikipedia's list).

Actually, I think the Vampiric Mist first appeared in the 1st Edition Module *Baltron's Beacon*, where, if I recall correctly, it was actually explicitly stated to be an immature Crimson Death Mist.

I've always kind of liked the Crimson Death Mist, though I don't believe I've ever used one. I vividly recall it being one of the first entries in the Monstrous Manual that I really absorbed.

The entry mentions that it can lift fairly substantial weights, and that it tends to keep the remains of those it feeds upon, which gives me the vision of one sort of clumsily animating a skeleton, perhaps to confuse would-be victims.

noisms

01-17-2009 09:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 9840793)
Yes.

,:-P~

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9841861)
And let us not forget the Vampyres from Ravenloft. All the blood drinking, without any of the undeadness, and an extra helping of entitlement mentality from never being human in the first place and raised to think of normal

humans as just sheep. Man, they came up with a million goofy variants on the same monsters.

Tch, I set myself up for those, didn't I?

Anyway, new entry coming soon. I spent the last two or three days in transit through international airspace and in various hotel rooms, but I'm back in the land of the living now.

Inyssius

01-17-2009 11:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 9850377)

The entry mentions that it can lift fairly substantial weights, and that it tends to keep the remains of those it feeds upon, which gives me the vision of one sort of clumsily animating a skeleton, perhaps to confuse would-be victims.

Ooh, now that reminds me of the Vashta Nerada.

kelvingreen

01-17-2009 07:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9849089)

I'd lean more towards the Masque of Red Death, what with it being in the title and all.

Or maybe Rocket Raccoon :).

Have one I know Awesome 80's Marvel Miniseries When I See Them point! I love that series.

JRM

01-17-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 9850377)

Actually, I think the Vampiric Mist first appeared in the 1st Edition Module Baltron's Beacon, where, if I recall correctly, it was actually explicitly stated to be an immature Crimson Death Mist.

I've always kind of liked the Crimson Death Mist, though I don't believe I've ever used one. I vividly recall it being one

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The entry mentions that it can lift fairly substantial weights, and that it tends to keep the remains of those it feeds upon, which gives me the vision of one sort of clumsily animating a skeleton, perhaps to confuse would-be victims.

It did? That is interesting. I wasn't entirely sure about the origins of the monster, which is why I mentioned it was just according to Wikipedia. I've also seen a couple of references to it being in the Greyhawk Monstrous Compendium (MC5). In any case, my main point was that, despite its obvious suitability, it didn't originate as a Ravenloft monster.

By the way, during a brief glance around the internet I found a **3rd edition conversion on the Creature Catalog** which agrees with you about the Vampiric Mist coming from module I7.

(un)reason

01-17-2009 10:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 9850377)

Actually, I think the Vampiric Mist first appeared in the 1st Edition Module Baltron's Beacon, where, if I recall correctly, it was actually explicitly stated to be an immature Crimson Death Mist.

I've always kind of liked the Crimson Death Mist, though I don't believe I've ever used one. I vividly recall it being one of the first entries in the Monstrous Manual that I really absorbed.

The entry mentions that it can lift fairly substantial weights, and that it tends to keep the remains of those it feeds upon, which gives me the vision of one sort of clumsily animating a skeleton, perhaps to confuse would-be victims.

I did wonder back in the day what the hell they do with their genius level intelligence. You don't want to have something that smart just leaping at you and attacking unless it's starving. It's like illithids. If they don't have a scheme and some tactics to make their attacks more effective, it feels like you aren't playing them right.

JRM

01-18-2009 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 9852743)

I did wonder back in the day what the hell they do with their genius level intelligence. You don't want to have something that smart just leaping at you and attacking unless it's starving. It's like illithids. If they don't have a scheme and some tactics to make their attacks more effective, it feels like you aren't playing them right.

Weren't we talking about Vampiric Mists, which have Average Intelligence (8-10) in 2E - and 1E as well going by **these copies of their original stats** on Enworld.

I'll agree about the Crimson Death, although rather than making them scheming powers I can't help imagine them bemoaning the curse of having superintelligence which is unnecessary for their basic lifestyle "Here I am, brain the size of a planet, floating around a swamp sucking the blood out of peasants."

EDIT: Oh, and I found yet another AD&D misty bloodsucker, the **Scarlet Dancer Mist**. How many different types of these bloody things are there in official sources?!

Vultur10

01-18-2009 12:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What do the Crimson Death Mists do with their intelligence?

They sing. Crimson Deaths spend the time between hunts by composing weird alien songs. When two Deaths meet, they sing their most recent compositions to each other; through the medium of these songs, they share knowledge and their experiences and ideas. Most of this music is pitched below the level of the human ear, and it is accompanied by modulations of the mist's density and composition not easily noticed. However, a *tongues* spell allows a character to eavesdrop on the meeting of two mists; they may regret this, though, as the concepts hatched in such cold, ancient, alien minds and coded in their inhuman rhythms can drive a man mad.

kelvingreen

01-18-2009 02:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 9852966)

However, a tongues spell allows a character to eavesdrop on the meeting of two mists; they may regret this, though, as the concepts hatched in such cold, ancient, alien minds and coded in their inhuman rhythms can drive a man mad

Just like Elven Cat!

JRM

01-18-2009 02:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9853440)

Just like Elven Cat!

I doubt that. I have conversations with the neighbourhood cat all the time and am perfectly sane.;)

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mist, Vampiric

More mist, and a creature not discernibly different from the previous one, except for its over-complicated combat rules and its method of attack: where the Crimson Death gets you with tendrils, the Vampiric Mist has to envelop you entirely, laying itself (and you) open to attack from your comrades.

The main difference between a Vampiric Mist and the Crimson Death kind is all in the flavour: where Crimson Death Mists are laden with plot hooks, Vampirics seem rather functional. They want your blood and that's about it. Watch out. I do like the nice detail of the mists' stench of old blood, though: this attracts stirges, leeches and other blood-drinkers, which would be the basis of an interesting encounter. A Vampiric Mist followed by a horde of stirges would pose a whole new challenge.

What of Vampiric Mists' origins? Well, our sages "first thought [them] to be immature forms of crimson death", but it "is now known that these fiends were deliberately created by a powerful vampire wizard." Known by whom, and how they found out, we are left to imagine.

I have to admit I first encountered Vampiric Mists not in AD&D but in a Roguelike computer game, Zangband, where they are the first monsters with level-draining abilities which you're likely to come across. They hunt in packs, and are represented only by black '#' signs, so they're extremely difficult to spot against the black screen. Nasty buggers. The AD&D kind don't have such characteristics, which makes them much less frightening if you ask me. I think I might have a go at statting up a Zangband version some day.

JRM

01-18-2009 08:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9854556)

Mist, Vampiric

More mist, and a creature not discernibly different from the previous one, except for its over-complicated combat rules and its method of attack: where the Crimson Death gets you with tendrils, the Vampiric Mist has to envelop you entirely, laying itself (and you) open to attack from your comrades.

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Well there are a fair number of differences. Apart from being weaker and dumber, a Vampiric Mist ignores armour (their tendrils only need to hit AC10 plus the target's Dex & magic adjustment) and it heals itself by whatever quantity of hit points of blood it drains.

As for the Vampiric Mist followed by a horde of stirges idea, surely the Mist would try to blood drain the stirges like it would any other animal? Hence the "fatally" in the Ecology entry's "stirges, leeches, and other

bloodsuckers are sometimes drawn (fatally) to their smell."

This entry reminds me, yet again, of the odd consequences of AD&D having blood drain = hit points. Three stirges or a vampiric mist could drain dry most 1st-2nd level characters, but not any high level ones. Either a 10th level character has ten times more blood than a 1st level one, or their blood is ten times more potent (which makes a sort of sense), so a few ounces of it is enough to satiate a monster that would need to drain a peasant dry. Hmm, maybe they're not exactly satiated, but *drunk* on the blood. A 10th level character's blood could be like brandy compared to a commoner's "small beer" or even "water" blood?

demiurge1138

01-18-2009 09:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yeah, I never got why there were mists of both the crimson death and vampiric varieties in the MM. Whereas the crimson death mist's artwork is memorably bad, in sort of a heavy metal album cover sort of way, the vampiric mist's artwork is just bland.

noisms

01-18-2009 10:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9854612)

Well there are a fair number of differences. Apart from being weaker and dumber, a Vampiric Mist ignores armour (their tendrils only need to hit AC10 plus the target's Dex & magic adjustment) and it heals itself by whatever quantity of hit points of blood it drains.

Yeah, that's what I meant by the complicated combat rules. They aren't that unusual or difficult, but the way they are explained induces instant brain stem death in me, as is often the case with MM entries.

Quote:

As for the Vampiric Mist followed by a horde of stirges idea, surely the Mist would try to blood drain the stirges like would any other animal? Hence the "fatally" in the Ecology entry's "stirges, leeches, and other bloodsuckers are sometimes drawn (fatally) to their smell."

That's much less fun, though!

It does raise the interesting point: why would a Vampiric Mist bother attacking adventurers? If it hangs around in swamps there must be leeches and stirges aplenty to eat, not to mention all the birds, fish, turtles etc. that live there. Indeed, why not just go off to the nearby farm and devour a sheep or two? Not as big as a human but also not as likely to start hacking at you with a Sword +1.

SuperG

01-18-2009 01:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9854966)

Yeah, that's what I meant by the complicated combat rules. They aren't that unusual or difficult, but the way they are explained induces instant brain stem death in me, as is often the case with MM entries.

That's much less fun, though!

It does raise the interesting point: why would a Vampiric Mist bother attacking adventurers? If it hangs around in swamps there must be leeches and stirges aplenty to eat, not to mention all the birds, fish, turtles etc. that live there. Indeed, why not just go off to the nearby farm and devour a sheep or two? Not as big as a human but also not as likely to start hacking at you with a Sword +1.

Vampiric Mists are intelligent and can control their bloodlust?

Plus PC's go out there and attack stuff. 'Eep! It's EATIN' OUR SHEEP!'

Plus, it probably is used to eating peasants.

JRM

01-18-2009 06:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9854966)

Yeah, that's what I meant by the complicated combat rules. They aren't that unusual or difficult, but the way they are explained induces instant brain stem death in me, as is often the case with MM entries.

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It does raise the interesting point: why would a Vampiric Mist bother attacking adventurers? If it hangs around in swamps there must be leeches and stirges aplenty to eat, not to mention all the birds, fish, turtles etc. that live there. Indeed, why not just go off to the nearby farm and devour a sheep or two? Not as big as a human but also not as likely to start hacking at you with a Sword +1.

Well, my thinking is that that's the vampire mist's regular diet, and it bothers adventures when the latter are called in to deal with it "A Devil Fog kilt our sheep an' me Uncle Ned, oil giv ye five ewes if ye gets rid of hit!".

I also wonder whether humans aren't easier to catch, since they have a poor manoeuvrability and sense of smell. All the other animals flee at the first sniff of the Mist's Stink of Death so it has to attack them upwind, which probably slows it down a lot to, it being gaseous and all. Not to mention that many swamp animals can easily avoid its attacks - anything faster than speed 12 can simply run or fly away, anything that can swim can duck under the water where the Mist can never follow.

noisms

01-19-2009 07:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9856097)

I also wonder whether humans aren't easier to catch, since they have a poor manoeuvrability and sense of smell.

We are pretty crap in most respects, aren't we? How humans ever came to dominate most fantasy worlds is beyond me.

noisms

01-19-2009 07:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mold

Are Molds the most boring type of monster? I actually have rather a soft spot for them, as they have plenty of potential for weirdness - and for what they are, in terms of bang-for-buck in XP, they are among the mightiest of all creatures.

Molds are the only form of monster, I think, which don't have hit dice, THACO, or attacks. They hit automatically and are only killed by certain effects described in the text.

Brown Mold

Brown Molds drain heat, instantly taking 4d8 hit points worth per round whenever a warm blooded creature comes within 5 feet. 4d8 hit points! More than enough to kill a first or second level adventurer. They double in size when exposed to torchlight, quadruple in size when exposed to flaming oil, and grow by eight times when hit by a fireball, and are resistant to all forms of magic except those which affect plants, cause cold, or *disintegrate*. And all this for only 15 XP.

Russet Mold

This mold resembles rust, and emits spores which cause 5d4 hit points of damage and induce an instakill save vs. death response due to their "spore sickness" attack. Those killed by spore sickness come back as vegpepygmies when the spores have completely taken them over: what relationship does this hint at between the Russet Molds and Mold Men? Russet Molds are worth 35 XP.

Yellow Mold

These molds can kill instantly when 'touched roughly' and sometimes grow into sentient, 300' square colonies with psionic powers and the ability to eat intelligence and shoot spores to a 60' distance. They are worth... 65 XP.

JasonK

01-19-2009 04:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Man, I hate molds. Sure, they're nasty. Yes, their existence makes perfect sense in that weird D&D logic kind of way.

But fighting them just seems so... unheroic. Here I am, hacking away at the... mold.

Mold as a pure environmental hazard I can understand, though. I'd do it 4E-style: difficult terrain, causes poison (cold for brown, psychic for yellow) damage if you start your turn there, plus ongoing (save ends). I don't have my DM's Guide, so I've got no clue if actual mold was actually statted out there this way or no...

Anyway, the Mimic discussion was recent enough that I feel this might still be relevant:

<http://badgods.com/images/mimic.png>

- jasön

demiurge1138

01-19-2009 04:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I forgot that yellow mold used to have psionic potential! That's neat!

Favorite thing to do with molds--have them growing on undead. Skeletons are much scarier if they're dripping with brown mold, and fleshier undead make for great repositories of yellow mold.

JasonK

01-19-2009 04:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9859859)

Favorite thing to do with molds--have them growing on undead. Skeletons are much scarier if they're dripping with brown mold, and fleshier undead make for great repositories of yellow mold.

Ok, I take back what I said earlier - that makes mold totally awesome. :)

- jasön

DMH

01-19-2009 08:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There is an episode of X-files with killer mold and it was that that turned me on to using them as a horror (the most inhuman of monsters). I don't have them sitting on the wall, they are almost always on a body or skeleton. Finding why the dragon stopped raiding isn't so fun when its corpse and hoard is covered with yellow mold.

There are 3 or 4 more in one of the Annual MCs though not have one basic trait I use- delayed reaction. It would be better for the brown mold spores to slowly consume the lungs and body heat of a victim so that it will end up far from

the parent mass. d4 days to weeks later and bam, stated damage starts occurring.

sim_james

01-19-2009 08:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858374)
[Brown Mold

Brown Molds drain heat, instantly taking 4d8 hit points worth per round whenever a warm blooded creature comes within 5 feet. 4d8 hit points! More than enough to kill a first or second level adventurer. They double in size when exposed to torchlight, quadruple in size when exposed to flaming oil, and grow by eight times when hit by a fireball, and are resistant to all forms of magic except those which affect plants, cause cold, or disintegrate. And all this for only 15 XP.

Brown mold is a great way to make a passageway basically untraversable for a low-level party, forcing them to go another way... until they find the *scroll of cone of cold* elsewhere in the dungeon.

It's pretty obvious what you're dealing with when you see brown mold, because it expands in size so *fast* (doubled by torchlight!), so the 4d8 hp damage will only be suffered by PCs foolhardy enough to charge through or unlucky enough to accidentally expand it to enormous proportions. Could be a good way to keep an area of the dungeon unexplored until you're ready for the PCs to deal with it.

Intelligent undead must love a bit of brown mold - I imagine that the lairs of mummies and vampires could be full of the stuff.

Wakboth

01-20-2009 02:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The molds have grown on me over the years. ;)

They're an essential part of the wacky dungeon biosphere of older (A)D&D, along with the oozes, slimes, puddings and odd fungi.

The encounter I remember best with them comes from the sample adventure in the Basic set of BECM1. There's a room in the abandoned castle, with a dinner table set with what appear to be gold utensils and plates; but in fact, they're tin and just overgrown with yellow mold. Talk about a nasty way to mess with your greedy players!

demiurge1138

01-20-2009 03:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Actually, my players have generally been unfamiliar with the molds, despite their years of gaming experience. I ran an all-dwarf version of "The Whispering Cairn", the first Age of Worms adventure and basically my favorite 1st level dungeon crawl ever. They were all dwarves, so they didn't need torches or other light sources, and found a room overgrown with brown mold.

"OK, so it's cold... so fire should kill it!" thought the rogue. Who then lit a match and threw it in.

The rest of the dwarves had to fish out his shivering, unconscious body with multiple ten foot poles tied together after the mold trebled in size and grew around him. Good times.

JRM

01-20-2009 05:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858374)

Mold

Are Molds the most boring type of monster? I actually have rather a soft spot for them, as they have plenty of potential for weirdness - and for what they are, in terms of bang-for-buck in XP, they are among the mightiest of all creatures.

Never used molds much myself, they are just too static for my tastes. I prefer Oozes, Puddings & Slimes which creep after the PCs with horrible obstinacy. You're quite right about the bang-for-the buck, they make horribly effective weapons for monsters to use - the aforementioned mold covered undead, goblins throwing pottery jars filled with yellow mold, et cetera.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858374)

Brown Mold

I can only remember using brown mold once, I could never extinguish the thought that if brown mold grows at great speed in any lightless area with any warmth, then why isn't the entire underworld one enormous mass of brown mold? Not to mention its blatant defiance of conservation of energy (that much mass from at best a few kilowatts of power - impossible!) always irked me.

Hmm... here's one explanation, maybe brown mold is a pandimensional fungus. A patch of brown mold forms around microscopic rifts between the planes, just big enough for it to slip its spores and mycella through. When brown mold appears to grow at blinding speed, what it's actually doing is using the absorbed energy to shunt a vast mass of mold through from another dimension. Somewhere out there is a Prime Material plane which is nothing but frozen brown mold, reaching out to other worlds and realities for the heat it needs to survive...

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858374)

Brown Mold Russet Mold

This mold resembles rust, and emits spores which cause 5d4 hit points of damage and induce an instakill save vs. death response due to their "spore sickness" attack. Those killed by spore sickness come back as vegepygmies when the spores have completely taken them over: what relationship does this hint at between the Russet Molds and Mold Men? Russet Molds are worth 35 XP.

The relationship is quite clear - Russet Mold and Mold Men are two forms of the same lifeform, the latter one exploiting the shape (or actual body) of a humanoid to become an ambulatory weapon-wielding sapient.

It gets better, they are Fungi From Outer Space - both monsters originated in Gygax's Expedition to the Barrier Peaks, where an infestation of these creatures can be found in part of a crashed space vessel.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858374)
Yellow Mold

These molds can kill instantly when 'touched roughly' and sometimes grow into sentient, 300' square colonies with psionic powers and the ability to eat intelligence and shoot spores to a 60' distance. They are worth... 65 XP.

This is the only mold I've used more than once, so you won't be surprised to hear they're my favourite of the molds. I like the way they only emit spores sometimes when roughly handled, so I can have passages when characters are tip-toeing around or gingerly stepping over patches of this deadly fungus. Plus, they are relatively simple to destroy (cleanse it with fire!), so I don't have to worry about the party being unequipped to deal with them.

Finally, the possibility that they become sentient and psionic has intriguing potential.

Does a big enough piece of yellow mold begin to scheme and manipulate with its enlarged psychic powers?

Or how about Sabrina the Sorceress, a proverbial Evil Mad Wizard, becomes obsessed with understanding the alien mind of yellow mold, so begins cultivating one in her tower's basement and chaining scholars in its chamber. She separates the two with a glasteel wall, so the mold cannot kill the sage with its spores, while allowing the mold to slowly devour their minds 1 point of intelligence at a time, in the hope that if it eats enough Intelligence she will be able to learn its secrets through conversation

Malignant Marionette

01-20-2009 05:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858306)

We are pretty crap in most respects, aren't we? How humans ever came to dominate most fantasy worlds is beyond me.

I'm betting the nearly unending supply of unhinged adventurers, crazed priests and power-hungry wizard carving their supply of experience from the hide of every other living (and unliving) creature around them might have something to do with it. :p

DMH

01-20-2009 07:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Another potential mobile host for some molds is the troll. I would reduce its ability to regenerate to represent how it is regenerating against the mold's consumption (to 1 point per two rounds (1/2e) or fast healing 1 (3.X)).

And I was sort of right with the Annual MCs. 3 are in the 2nd (though one is much more lik an ooze) and 2 in the 4th (one of which has a delayed reaction, though it is only d4 hours).

Wakshaani

01-20-2009 08:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yellow Mold is yet another of the Ancient Foes, and longstanding rumor is that, somewhere DEEP underground, the Original Yellow Mold still lives, the very firstsentient, or sentient-ish, thing on teh entire planet. It's miles across now, and seperated segments have been carried up towards the surface, where small colonies grow into their own eventual groupminds.

But the first, giant, and amazingly Psionic mold?

It predates fish.

It can think.

And it hungers.

Kakita Kojiro

01-20-2009 09:33 AM

We once had a DM whose players had learned to clear out yellow mold infestations with fire. So they next ran across a yellow mold infestation -- surrounding a *brown* mold infestation.

Yeah. I'm a bastard.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9861968)

I can only remember using brown mold once, I could never extinguish the thought that if brown mold grows at great speed in any lightless area with any warmth, then why isn't the entire underworld one enormous mass of brown mold? Not to mention its blatant defiance of conservation of energy (that much mass from at best a few kilowatts o; power - impossible!) always irked me.

There has to be *something* to feed all those Underdark inhabitants. Caves are notoriously poor at sustaining ecosystems, and even when they do it is mostly sustained on food sources from the surface. Superfast growing brown mold could be feeding all those whosname underdark sheep (rothe?).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9862913)

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Such as this?

Vultur10

01-20-2009 09:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9862913)
But the first, giant, and amazingly Psionic mold?

It predates fish.

It can think.

And it hungers.

Awesomely creepy.

Inyssius

01-20-2009 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9863102)
There has to be something to feed all those Underdark inhabitants. Caves are notoriously poor at sustaining ecosystems, and even when they do it is mostly sustained on food sources from the surface. Superfast growing brow mold could be feeding all those whosname underdark sheep (rothe?).

Planar portals? A permanent window to the elemental plane of fire or of positive energy, or even to Limbo, *is like having a little sun right in your closet*, and I should think that a portal to another plane would at least provide some energy.

Ditto ambient magic deposits. Wild magic zones?

Also, yes, the *rothé*. How does something like that work underground? Wouldn't, say, the kruthik work better? Or something else less obviously not-at-all-optimized for burrowing?

glass

01-20-2009 06:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9861606)

"OK, so it's cold... so fire should kill it!" thought the rogue. Who then lit a match and threw it in.

My players made the same assumption in the same adventure. Thankfully, the 3.5 version's growth isn't quite so prodigious as the 2e version (or I read it wrong :D), and the PCs threw fire from just far enough away that the expanding mould didn't reach them.

glass.

JRM

01-20-2009 07:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9863102)

There has to be something to feed all those Underdark inhabitants. Caves are notoriously poor at sustaining ecosystems, and even when they do it is mostly sustained on food sources from the surface. Superfast growing brown mold could be feeding all those whosname underdark sheep (rothe?).

Yes, I had that thought too, but it would require a fast-breeding subterranean fungivore that is immune to cold damage. Can't think of any in the Monstrous Manual. Plus, AD&D has a lot of other subterranean plants & fungi that grow with hard to explain fecundity, so brown mold need not be the underworld ecology's food base (for all we know that might be Deepspawn, or the Gibberling Replicator proposed in our earlier threat).

I still prefer my "Plane of Brown Mold" theory.

kami2awa

01-21-2009 07:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

A while ago, someone suggested that the Underdark ecology is based on a type of very populous lizard, a tiny creature that doesn't eat but instead makes nutrient directly from ambient magic; "magosynthesis".

It's called Maxwell's Demon. :D

Zounds!

01-21-2009 07:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I'm sure that at some point in the Forgotten Realms Underdark supplement they state outright that the Underdark ecology is based on magic - the same 'strange underground magical radiation' which has been giving the drow their special powers since AD&D 1st edition. The fungus soaks up the magical radiation and grows to immense size, taking on bizarre magical properties as it does so. The animals eat the fungus. The humanoids eat the animals. And the Mind Flayers eat everyone else's brains.

Wakboth

01-21-2009 08:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In an campaign that never quite got off the ground, I had the idea that the Underdark was created during a battle between elemental lords. Thus you had huge caverns full of air and water, with spouts of fire as well, throughout the earth, and a terribly high level of background magic. It explained all the more-or-less habitable underground domains with ecosystems based on unnaturally prolific fungi and molds and whatnot.

DMH

01-21-2009 08:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Why couldn't an underdark that is several million years old have a complex ecosystem? Energy input is from the surface, the deeps (thermal) or even the stones themselves- there are bacteria that survive by chemosynthesis of their substrate. Magic adds to it, but it doesn't have to be the basis or origin.

Kakita Kojiro

01-21-2009 10:29 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9869648)

Why couldn't an underdark that is several million years old have a complex ecosystem? Energy input is from the surface, the deeps (thermal) or even the stones themselves- there are bacteria that survive by chemosynthesis of their substrate. Magic adds to it, but it doesn't have to be the basis or origin.

Because we look for comparison at the underground cave systems we are familiar with -- that have been around for several million years, and most of which have ecosystems -- and see that they do not support the extremely high-energy ecosystem depicted for the Underdark.

And since this is D&D, if something is inexplicably different from the real world, we are forced to conclude that a wizard did it. Q.E.D., the Underdark runs on magic.

noisms

01-22-2009 07:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mold Man (Vegepygmy)

I like that these creatures - who must be very rarely encountered - have not one but two of their own derogatory nicknames - "vegepygmies" and "moldies". If any D&D creature was to have a derogatory nickname you would expect

kobolds, goblins or orcs, really wouldn't you?

Anyway, Mold Men are a reasonable idea, though when it comes to fungus people I have to say that Myconids always struck me as more interesting. Mold Men are rather bland by comparison - all they are is little people made out of fungus, who in most other respects behave like goblins or tasloi, say. They're just a little smaller, tougher and better at manipulating fungi for their own ends. Not enough flavour, dammit!

Chief Mold Men have a similar attack to Russet Molds, i.e. they can release spores which kill you and turn you into another Mold Man, with 4 HD. It has only just occurred to me that this must surely mean victims have to shrink (or grow) to 3.5 feet. Try explaining *that*.

Inyssius

01-22-2009 07:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9872018)

Chief Mold Men have a similar attack to Russet Molds, i.e. they can release spores which kill you and turn you into another Mold Man, with 4 HD. It has only just occurred to me that this must surely mean victims have to shrink (or grow) to 3.5 feet. Try explaining that.

Since mold creatures are surely *much* less dense than regular creatures, I could see a 2'6" halfling providing plenty of mass for a good-sized vegepygmy. For that matter, shouldn't your average hulking orc barbarian have enough meat to produce four or five Mold Men?

The Last Conformist

01-22-2009 08:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9872018)

I like that these creatures - who must be very rarely encountered - have not one but two of their own derogatory nicknames - "vegepygmies" and "moldies". If any D&D creature was to have a derogatory nickname you would expect kobolds, goblins or orcs, really wouldn't you?

Kobold, goblin, and orc *are* the derogatory nicknames. It's just that nobody ever feels the need to use a non-derogatory word for them.

randomgamer8466

01-22-2009 08:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Maybe in the same way that surface plants derive energy from light, Underdark plants (fungi, whatever) synthesize energy from darkness. Scurosynthesis? Mavrosynthesis?

I realize that this runs counter to physics, but come on people. it's D&D! Anyway, D&D does tend to treat both darkness and cold (both of which are the absence of energy) as manifestations of energy in some circumstances (Cone of cold, Darkness 15' radius).

noisms

01-22-2009 08:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9872392)

Maybe in the same way that surface plants derive energy from light, Underdark plants (fungi, whatever) synthesize energy from darkness. Scurosynthesis? Mavrosynthesis?

I realize that this runs counter to physics, but come on people. it's D&D! Anyway, D&D does tend to treat both darkness and cold (both of which are the absence of energy) as manifestations of energy in some circumstances (Cone of cold, Darkness 15' radius).

Something to do with dark matter maybe?

Wakshaani

01-22-2009 01:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

They operate on the Darlon principle, obviously, where darkness is a created energy and light *absorbs* darkons... teh Sun itself is a MASSIVE Darkon sink.

kami2awa

01-22-2009 06:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9872240)

Kobold, goblin, and orc are the derogatory nicknames. It's just that nobody ever feels the need to use a non-derogatory word for them.

So what do they call themselves?

DMH

01-22-2009 06:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

IIRC vegepygmies could reproduce on their own as well as use russet mold in Barrier Peaks. It was only later did the

authors remove their ability to breed on their own.

So, what kind of culture exists for a creature that can, more or less, spontaneously appear? If there is no overlap in generations, there is no transmission of values and knowledge. Could they become something more if the ability to breed was reintroduced?

And I like the idea of larger creatures = more vegepygmyies.

The Last Conformist

01-22-2009 10:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 9873829)
So what do they call themselves?

Kobold, orc, goblin. They're not big on the whole self-respect thing.

Mr. Teapot

01-23-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9873862)
IIRC vegepygmyies could reproduce on their own as well as use russet mold in Barrier Peaks. It was only later did the authors remove their ability to breed on their own.

So, what kind of culture exists for a creature that can, more or less, spontaneously appear? If there is no overlap in generations, there is no transmission of values and knowledge. Could they become something more if the ability to breed was reintroduced?

And I like the idea of larger creatures = more vegepygmyies.

Perhaps Vegepygmyies transmit cultural knowledge through some sort of racial memory instead of by learning?
Or perhaps they have to start back from square one each time?

Or, if you change Vegepygmyies to work off of the psychic yellow mold instead of russet mold, the vegepygmyies might just be parts of the huge hivemind intelligence. Specifically, a portion of mold designed to perform tasks yellow mold can't do easily on its own, including build structures, use tools and interact with humanoids.

noisms

01-23-2009 06:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mongrelman

I love Mongrelmen unreservedly and won't hear a word said against them. Like Broken Ones, they are one of the great, tragically overlooked creatures of fantasy role playing history. Even if they do have many egregious instances of exception based design scattered through their entry.

What I like most about Mongrelmen is the Lawful Neutral alignment, and the fact that even when enslaved or forced into serfdom by evil overlords, their attitude remains strictly stoical. There isn't enough stoicism among D&D races. You can even imagine Mongrelmen equivalents of Marcus Aurelius and Seneca pontificating to their comrades after the work is through for the day.

I also like the idea of a race of beings who are just misunderstood. Evil creatures enslave them and good creatures hunt them for sport, assuming the worst about them. But they've got it all wrong; Mongrelmen just want to be left alone.

One of those ideas I've always wanted to work into a campaign is that Mongrelmen, despite their long history of oppression and secrecy, are keepers of an ancient and secret Knowledge that they have maintained for millenia. And yet nobody knows it, because they keep it so well... until one day, a group of adventurers are hired in an inn by a wizard...

JRM

01-23-2009 11:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9878757)

Mongrelman

Three questions occurred to me after reading through the Mongrelman entry (who would presumably become "Mongrelfolk" in 3rd edition :cool:).

Firstly, why are they Lawful Neutral? D&D tends to assume creatures with that alignment are highly rule-bound and disciplined, so why would a race that is primarily made up of slaves, outcasts and scavengers have that alignment? Other LN races have obvious reasons for possessing that alignment - they're Law Incarnate (Modrons), hive-minded bug people (Formians) or must have disciplined minds to face the Madness of Limb (Githzeria).

I suppose it could be a cultural thing, but why would they keep a culture of "obey the slavemaster's rules without protest" during those periods when they're not slaves, as well as the problem in maintaining a common culture in a race which is widely scattered in small groups. I'm suspecting it must be something inherent in their thought-processes, which are as inhuman as their appearance. Now I don't think it's very likely that would arise spontaneously as a result of random mongrelisation between humanoid races, surely a Neutral alignment would be more likely if you mix and match a lot of humanoids. That leads me to the next question.

Secondly, where and how did they originate? I'm thinking they are most likely a created race, literally born to be serfs - but what race could have created them?

Thirdly, do they have any connection with the Broken Ones? Did the creator race try blending animals with humanoids as well as humanoids with other humanoids?

Hmm... or maybe they're two forms of the same species, created as a biological booby trap. The creator race sold masses of docile mongrelmen slaves to its neighbors, and then when the time was right cast the ritual

which caused them to metamorphose into Broken Ones and tear their enemies' civilizations to pieces. Unfortunately for them, they did not foresee the Broken Ones would develop a Greater form which in turn destroyed their creator's society.

Kakita Kojiro

01-24-2009 12:12 AM

I've always liked the mongrelmen as a sort of lampshade hung on the weird fantasy genetics of D&D. With half-elves and half-orcs (and, later, half-dragons and half-all-sorts-of-things), you've got to wonder what is going on.

However, I've always liked them as more of an *emergent* race, rather than (yet another) ancient-now-fallen race. D&D already has so many of those races lying around that you literally cannot enter a dungeon without tripping over a half-dozen or so. (Just how many fallen-races-before-all-others races is **Wak** up to by now, in his count with bullywugs and kuo-toa and locathath and yellow molds and whatnot?)

When even the half-elves and half-orcs get treated as "established" races, it really does free up the niche of newcomers for mongrelmen. And *that* plays into their background of being escaped slaves and whatnot -- they're so new, that they don't have a culture yet, but these escapees are *trying* to build themselves a culture. So they're very insular (shun outsiders), and value conformity to their neo-cultural norms (i.e., they're Lawful).

demiurge1138

01-24-2009 01:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I like mongrelfolk a lot... but I'm confused by their treatment in other sections of the Monster Manual. The lengthy section on orcs mentions that many mongrelmen have a lot of orc blood, leading to their naturally chaotic and evil disposition. But that's not what mongrelmen are about at all!

In the 3.5 Dungeon adventure "The Lightless Depths" (part of the Savage Tide Adventure Path, but a satisfying enough Underdark-crawl that I'd run it without), there's a village of mongrelfolk underneath the Isle of Dread. They've cobbled together a village, have strong traditions and are defended by a maze of yellow mold and a pack of trained hook horrors, but know that anybody who can steamroll through their defenses (IE adventurers) could easily slaughter them and is thus worth treating deferentially.

Sleeper

01-24-2009 03:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9880205)

I like mongrelfolk a lot... but I'm confused by their treatment in other sections of the Monster Manual. The lengthy section on orcs mentions that many mongrelmen have a lot of orc blood, leading to their naturally chaotic and evil disposition. But that's not what mongrelmen are about at all!

You could always treat those as rumors.

In fact, that's always an interesting take on the MM. Treat the entire book as a collection of rumors and tales the players might have heard. Which are true, which are not? Are dragons really wise or is that just a story that sprung up around the feral beasts, are orcs really unmitigatedly evil or are they just the fantasy equivalent of Saracens, are mongrelfolk wicked Moreaus that turned on their creators or an emergent race?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9879941)

*(Just how many fallen-races-before-all-others races is **Wak** up to by now, in his count with bullywugs and kuo-toa an locathath and yellow molds and whatnot?)*

For the record:

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Yellow Mold (Theory, possible rumor)

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Mind Flayers (And relatives. MIGHT include Aboleths in this!)

THIRD

Aarocca, Lizardfolk (And possibly Kobolds and/or Troglodytes), Bullywugs, and Kua-Toa

FOURTH

Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Goblins

FIFTH

Man

Dragons would crop up after or at the tail end of the Third Age, and are in place as teh 4th age rolls in.

noisms

01-24-2009 08:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9880985)

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In fact, that's always an interesting take on the MM. Treat the entire book as a collection of rumors and tales the players might have heard. Which are true, which are not? Are dragons really wise or is that just a story that sprung up around the feral beasts, are orcs really unmitigatedly evil or are they just the fantasy equivalent of Saracens, are mongrelfolk wicked Moreaus that turned on their creators or an emergent race?

My ideal bestiary would be like that. It wouldn't even have stats. It would be like a huge scrapbook of roughly scrawled eyewitness accounts, records of myths and rumours, hand-drawn sketches, and the occasional 'scientific' study by a sage. Then it would be up to the DM to create the stats for everything, based on what he could glean from the book, what he decided was true, and what he could imagine.

Too much work by half, but I love the idea.

Wakshaani

01-24-2009 09:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9882289)

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Too much work by half, but I love the idea.

You sir need to take a gander at Privateer Press' Monsternomicon. It has stats, sure, but teh FLUFF is written as half-truths and ongoing investigations, with a knowledge (So-n-So) list, with DC 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 soundbites. Which might not even be true.

It's *fantastic*.

rex monday

01-24-2009 03:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9882289)

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Maybe even a second volume with all the stats in it (and a few alternate stats for each entry). That'd never get published probably, unfortunately.

Have you ever seen the monster section of the Dying Earth RPG? Every entry is filled with conjecture and rumor. There's two entries on consecutive pages, each detailing monsters with wildly differing descriptions-same artwork. Both rendered by 'sages'.

noisms

01-24-2009 04:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by rex monday (Post 9883445)

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I'll have to give it a gander. Unfortunately you're probably right that my idea would never get published. Unless I do it myself, of course. ;)

demiurge1138

01-24-2009 05:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There's a number of "monster books" that serve a very similar role, except that they're not designed for games at all. Sitting on my shelf proudly are Dougal Dixon's speculative zoology trilogy (*After Man*, *The New Dinosaurs*, *Man After Man*), all of which I've plundered for D&D material, as well as *The Wildlife of Star Wars*, *The World of Kong* and *Fabulous Creatures and Magical Beings*, the supposed records of a fictional British cryptozoological society.

Mr. Teapot

01-24-2009 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9879704)

Firstly, why are they Lawful Neutral? D&D tends to assume creatures with that alignment are highly rule-bound and disciplined, so why would a race that is primarily made up of slaves, outcasts and scavengers have that alignment? Other LN races have obvious reasons for possessing that alignment - they're Law Incarnate (Modrons), hive-minded bug people (Formians) or must have disciplined minds to face the Madness of Limb (Githzeria).

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Secondly, where and how did they originate?

Well, if the mongrelmen are a created race, then that would answer the alignment issue: whatever race created the Mongrelfolk bred them/alterd them so they would be more orderly and predictable. That way rebellion was less likely and the mongrelfolk would stick to their routines of serving their masters without much question.

kelvingreen

01-25-2009 12:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9882289)

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The *Dragonlance: Fifth Age* monster book (*The Bestiary*, appropriately enough), was half way there. The bulk of the book was exactly as you describe, with the stats contained in small boxed sidebars.

Sleeper

01-25-2009 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9882289)

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Too much work by half, but I love the idea.

At one point, I seriously considered starting a thread with the goal of rewriting the entire MM. All the old monsters, entirely new approaches. Can be as simple as just a twist on the original core monster, or more complex ones like new powers and a few stat block tweaks, swapping stats (it's amazing how much you can change things just by renaming and recasting the monster while still keeping the same stats), or even a complete rewrite. Two or more options for each monster, with very different approaches.

JRM

01-25-2009 04:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9884041)

Well, if the mongrelmen are a created race, then that would answer the alignment issue: whatever race created the Mongrelfolk bred them/alterd them so they would be more orderly and predictable. That way rebellion was less likely and the mongrelfolk would stick to their routines of serving their masters without much question.

Yup that's what I was thinking, I thought it was pretty implicit when I suggested they were "literally born to be serfs".

Although come to think of it, there's no call to limit them to just toiling in the fields. They may only have Low-Average intelligence but there are still plenty of other tasks they could be employed to perform - I imagine most would work as labourers (maybe not in areas exposed to the public gaze, perhaps all the sewers and cesspits of a city are maintained by a hidden guild of mongrelmen) and various other low-status occupations such as charcoal burning, while their camouflage and mimicry skills would make them skilled gamekeepers. Of course, there's no reason exceptionally intelligent individuals might not perform more esteemed jobs. I half-suspect a mongrelman butler or librarian might be a bit of a cliché, but what about a mongrelman clerk, cellarer or apothecary?

JRM

01-25-2009 04:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9884280)

The Dragonlance: Fifth Age monster book (The Bestiary, appropriately enough), was half way there. The bulk of the book was exactly as you describe, with the stats contained in small boxed sidebars.

The latest version of the Warhammer Fantasy Roleplaying Game's Bestiary is the same, with ingame "facts" and rumour about creatures in the main part of the book, and the true deal and stats at the back.

DMH

01-25-2009 06:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

As is the 2 ecology texts for the Providence rpg. Heck the second one has the giant insects chapter as a cookbook.

Khuxan

01-25-2009 09:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9882289)

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Too much work by half, but I love the idea.

I think Fourth Edition is the perfect opportunity for this. In the front of the book, monster descriptions - rumours, facts, sketches - and in the back generic statblocks for every level and monster type, with a few nameless powers as examples for each level. The DM's work is negligible, he/she has a fully functioning statblock and the players don't know what to expect.

noisms

01-25-2009 09:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9884603)

At one point, I seriously considered starting a thread with the goal of rewriting the entire MM. All the old monsters, entirely new approaches. Can be as simple as just a twist on the original core monster, or more complex ones like new powers and a few stat block tweaks, swapping stats (it's amazing how much you can change things just by renaming and recasting the monster while still keeping the same stats), or even a complete rewrite. Two or more options for each monster, with very different approaches.

Seems like a very worthy project. A task worthy of Hercules though.

rex monday

01-25-2009 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

All this talk of patchwork Mongrelmen created as a source of slave labor makes me think of the ReMade from New Crobuzon. You could make becoming a Mongrelman the standard punishment by the (evil) magocracy.

(un)reason

01-25-2009 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by rex monday (Post 9887190)

All this talk of patchwork Mongrelmen created as a source of slave labor makes me think of the ReMade from New Crobuzon. You could make becoming a Mongrelman the standard punishment by the (evil) magocracy.

Already been done, in the Ravenloft domain of G'henna. Ok, so it's a theocracy, not a magocracy, but same principle.

JasonK

01-26-2009 03:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9882022)
For the record:

FIRST
Yellow Mold (Theory, possible rumor)

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Mind Flayers (And relatives. MIGHT include Aboleths in this!)

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Aarocca, Lizardfolk (And possibly Kobolds and/or Troglodytes), Bullywugs, and Kua-Toa

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Dragons would crop up after or at the tail end of the Third Age, and are in place as teh 4th age rolls in.

Wak, any sense where the Yuan-ti fit into this? Or are you waiting to call those until we get there in the thread?

- jasön

sim_james

01-26-2009 07:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Yuan-ti couldn't possibly be any older than the third wave, along with the lizardfolk. One possibility is that yuan-ti in their modern form date back only to the beginning of the fifth wave, when third wave reptilians diluted their blood with early humans in order to survive.

Perhaps human civilisation emerged when these proto-yuan-ti began breeding programs of primitive mammalian humanoids, attempting to engineer a race of breeding stock to help them to survive the growth of fourth wave cultures.

Wakshaani

01-26-2009 09:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9890155)
Wak, any sense where the Yuan-ti fit into this? Or are you waiting to call those until we get there in the thread?

- jasön

Never came up, so, at *best* they're from the same time as the lizardfolk, but I'd put 'em younger, since they have to crossbreed with humans. Heck, might even go so far as to say that they were originally humans who found old Lizard temples and started worshipping a lost diety, who gradually got them to ascend to Lizardness (Clearly better, since it was what said diety was based on) and, since then, they've been gradually spreading, adding more to the cult and striving for greater levels of reptillilanness. Would explain an awful lot.

Newer products (3.5, ferinstance) mention that several of teh Reptillian races (Lizardfolk, Kobolds, Troglodytes) have a common Lizardy ancestor, which could be the old Proto Race that devolved into these others. Would make sense, since many a DM has different Lizardfolk breeds scattered all over the place ... teh usual marsh dwellers, the 3.5 edition river-dwellers, cave lizards, and teh always-keen Sand Lizardfolk, which, really, are such a given that I'm stunned never got an official write-up.

noisms

01-26-2009 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Morkoth

A funny one, this - the illustration depicts a kind of six armed octopus-goblin centaur (gobloctaur?), but the text is deliberately vague about appearance: "no one is certain what [Morkoths] really look like". I don't mind vagueness mixed with my monsters, as it all adds to the mystery and allows a DM to put a fresh spin on things, but your mileage may vary.

Morkoths are an interesting monster, actually - one of the better underwater creatures. They live in confusing networks of narrows tunnels that have a hypnotising effect on those who enter; this functions like a *charm person* spell and draws the unfortunate victim to the Morkoth's maw in a leisurely fashion. They lure humanoids into their lairs through strategic use of treasure - they have no interest in gold or gems, but are well aware that other races covet them. This makes Morkoths great for the old bait-and-switch if you're a mean DM.

I like the idea of Morkoths and Kraken cooperating, though I'm confused by this sentence: "They sometimes make alliances with kraken, offering their help in exchange for an occasional slave", because in the very next paragraph it goes on to say, "[Morkoths] do not enslave their victims, if only because their appetites are so fierce that slaves would not survive long." Unless the first sentence is supposed to mean that Morkoths ask for help from Kraken in exchange for slaves?

Thranguy

01-27-2009 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9882022)
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Aarocca, Lizardfolk (And possibly Kobolds and/or Troglodytes), Bullywugs, and Kua-Toa

FOURTH

Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Goblins

FIFTH

Man

Dragons would crop up after or at the tail end of the Third Age, and are in place as the 4th age rolls in.

Where do the Beholders drop in? Second age?

Also curious about the Gith...the 'base stock' issue would tend to put them no earlier than the Fourth, but that seems late...

Kakita Kojiro

01-27-2009 01:43 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9891194)

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I'd read that as the Morkoths offer to help Krakens, and in return are paid by the kraken with slaves that the kraken has taken. Which the morkoth then eats.

I don't think I ever even *considered* using a morkoth, in any game, just because of the horrible illo it had in the AD&D Monster Manual.

JRM

01-27-2009 05:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9891194)

Morkoth

A funny one, this - the illustration depicts a kind of six armed octopus-goblin centaur (gobloctaur?), but the text is deliberately vague about appearance: "no one is certain what [Morkoths] really look like". I don't mind vagueness mixed with my monsters, as it all adds to the mystery and allows a DM to put a fresh spin on things, but your mileage may vary.

More to the point, the Monstrous Manual's illustration in no way matches the text, which makes no mention of insectoid arms or tentacle-legs. It even has a fish's mouth instead of the octopus beak all Morkoths attack with! And I quote:

"The descriptions given by those who have encountered morkoths contain considerable variation, so no one is certain what they really look like. They are usually said to resemble an intelligent fish with an octopus's beak. They are most frequently described as being between 5 to 6 feet long, inky black in color, with faint luminescent silver patches. They may have fins for arms and legs that vaguely resemble those of humans, and a number of fins for navigation and propulsion in the depths."

I agree that the vague appearance is part of a morkoth's charm, indeed I like to imagine them as protean creatures, which look like they've been assembled from bits and pieces of different deep sea predators, with no two Morkoths looking alike.

Hmm, maybe they **are** assembled from bits and pieces of deep sea predators, and all that stuff about female Morkoths and eggs is just distraction. Perhaps a Morkoth is an evil Abyssal spirit (in both the deep sea and lower planes sense of the word) that corrupts the egg of a giant cephalopod to become the seed of an unnatural body, which it grows using choice parts of its devoured victims.

As for their use in game, I find Morkoths a bit problematic since the party need to be at the bottom of the sea to meet one and some of my players hate sailing on the water, let alone diving beneath it. That, and they're not that resistant to a numerous or melee-strong party. The Morkoth has a great chance of charming one of the PCs, but the rest of them while just dogpile the devil-cuttlefish-fish and chop it to sushi.

By the way, does the charm effect mean the victim will try to defend the Morkoth from the rest of the party? There's no clear indication in any of the sources I've seen, which seem to infer the enchanted victim just stands their in a daze, making no effort to defend itself while the Morkoth *eats them alive*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9891194)

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Doesn't that mean the Morkoth gets given some of the Kraken's slaves for it to charm and devour? I see Kakita agrees.

Although I'm more interested in what aid a Morkoth will offer to a Kraken in return for this meal. Presumably a genius+ giant squid will think of all kinds of things it can ask a Morkoth to command *acharmed* victim to perform.

JasonK

01-27-2009 06:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9890777)

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Hhrm. That's actually perfect for me. Thanks, Wak! Great idea!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9891194)

Morkoth

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Sounds like those upper planar good things whose name starts with a Z. Only more gobliny. Weird.

Quote:

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I don't know what the hell a kraken would do with a slave, either... Use it to clean off barnacles? Maybe by slave they mean "snack"?

- jasön

Sleeper

01-27-2009 06:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9893067)

I don't know what the hell a kraken would do with a slave, either... Use it to clean off barnacles? Maybe by slave they mean "snack"?

Emissaries. Krakens are kind of stuck underwater, when everything interesting seems to happen on land. How can you blackmail a port city-state with near-constant hurricane-force weather (a *laweather summoning*), if you don't have an ambassador to tell the monarch in which bottomless trench to drop the loot? How can you make an arrangement with a merchant fleet to spare the ships flying their colors, in return for a steady supply of those things that just aren't usually found in the holds of merchant vessels, like spy networks and ancient lore? Kraken are like primeval god-beasts, forces of raw nature. Appeasement and worship. Disturbingly-shaped shrines built at the ancient cephalopod's behest, and swaying cults of sailors wanting to live another day.

I like the idea of morkoth being creatures of the deep. Luminescent, alien.

Wakshaani

01-27-2009 07:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thranguy (Post 9891652)
Where do the Beholders drop in? Second age?

Also curious about the Gith...the 'base stock' issue would tend to put them no earlier than the Fourth, but that seem: late...

Depends on the origin you want 'em to have, really. Abberations tend to do best if they predate Elves, or, at worst, coincide with 'em... gives them something to rail against and, more important, you have to have THINGS underground for Drow to discover when they were just 'Dark Elves', before being driven underground. Beholders don't have much culture as teh can't really stand one another, so, chalk 'em up as failed experiments by the Mind Flayers, way back when, to make guard animals, pets, or "Magical Experiments". AFter the Illithiad Empire collapses due to teh Elder Races (Aaroca, Bullywug, etc) uprising, the old experiments wander off, some vanishing, some thriving. Newer one sget made later on from younger races messing with half-finished or long-abandoned magics. Dopplgangers, for example, are good for this... they were created by Mind Flayers, or at least teh PROCESS was, but didn'tw ork as hosts so were abandoned and forgotten. When someone (We'll use Drow, just 'cause) started poking around in those old caverns and Lost Cities, one found the Doppleganger Brood Pens and turned it on, plopping a few out. They killed their discoverer, then fanned out, creating more of their own kind as they tried to find a place in this world ... they don't know who their creator was, so continue to explore and search looking for them. Similarly, they take on teh roles of others because, as discarded tools, they have no real role of their own to fulfill.

And now I'm *way* off topic.

So.

Morkoth.

Uhm.

Never used 'em... never really had any real OCEAN adventures *to* use 'em.

Hrm.

noisms

01-27-2009 09:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9893486)
So.

Morkoth.

Uhm.

*Never used 'em... never really had any real OCEAN adventures *to* use 'em.*

Hrm.

You could have them inhabiting underwater caverns in subterranean lakes far beneath the surface of the world.

Wakboth

01-27-2009 03:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Gets tangential, but does anyone remember the morkoth "illustration" from 1e MM?

JRM

01-27-2009 04:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9894905)
Gets tangential, but does anyone remember the morkoth "illustration" from 1e MM?

Oh yes, it's probably the root cause of my belief Morkoths should be shadowy horrors of indeterminate appearance.:o

As for the problem of never having any underwater adventures to use Morkoths, I used an amphibious variant once, which my party met in a the ruins of a sunken city that had risen from the waves. It used glittering slime-trails of shells, mucus and sea weed to lure in its prey rather than hypnotic tunnels, but was otherwise a standard Morkoth. Converting them into subterranean monsters is also a simple and obvious alternative, with twisting tunnels in the bowels of the Earth that draw in underworld fauna and incautious spelunkers.

see

01-27-2009 04:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858306)

We are pretty crap in most respects, aren't we? How humans ever came to dominate most fantasy worlds is beyond me.

In original AD&D 1e, the answer was, we don't have class restrictions or level limits. Only humans or half-humans could achieve level 12 or higher in any class other than thief, while any 20th-level party could thrash any monster in the Monster Manual. How could humans not dominate? We had all the *meteor swarms*, *heals*, and *wishes*!

The Last Conformist

01-28-2009 01:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

One can't help wondering how morkoths and kraken communicate.

Inyssius

01-28-2009 04:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9858306)

We are pretty crap in most respects, aren't we? How humans ever came to dominate most fantasy worlds is beyond me.

I have always wanted to run or play a game in a setting where we *totally don't*. Like, at all. Where the world is dominated by the berjillion elder races and ten times as many ultrapowerful monsters, where we live like rats in abandoned Giant cities and in the tiny always-shifting margin between the Civilized realms and the Deep Wild.

Much running away from tentacled horrors and assorted elder races, and a lot of resource protection. Just scrounging for food would be a main goal.

Sleeper

01-28-2009 06:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9896818)

One can't help wondering how morkoths and kraken communicate.

Aquaman.

demiurge1138

01-28-2009 08:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 9896818)
One can't help wondering how morkoths and kraken communicate.

The universal language of mathematics?

Inyssius

01-28-2009 08:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Messages conveyed via Xorvintaal, the Great Game of Dragons? Maybe not so... dragon-exclusive as first thought?

Wakshaani

01-28-2009 09:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Little known fact: Both Kraken and Morkoloth are fluent in Elven Cat.

Kakita Kojiro

01-28-2009 10:28 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9899122)
Little known fact: Both Kraken and Morkoloth are fluent in Elven Cat.

Sublime, truly sublime. :)

noisms

01-28-2009 10:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9899122)

Little known fact: Both Kraken and Morkoloth are fluent in Elven Cat.

Wakshaani wins the internet.

sim_james

01-28-2009 05:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9899122)

Little known fact: Both Kraken and Morkoloth are fluent in Elven Cat.

Goddamn you for reading my mind. *Goddamn* you.

The Last Conformist

01-29-2009 07:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9898234)

Aquaman.

Two bites out of the aquaman means yes, three means no ... ?

noisms

01-29-2009 08:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Muckdweller

There's not a whole lot down for your species if you're called 'muckdwellers', is there? And true to form, muckdwellers are an instantly forgettable creature, with terrible art, a boring entry, and annoyingly fiddly combat effects (they squirt water into your eyes, which causes you to lose your dexterity bonus, while they attack at +2 to hit, but then if they lure you into water, you're at -1 to hit, and zzzz....).

I don't think I've ever seen the things used in a game, and frankly that doesn't surprise or disappoint me.

Anyway, Muckdwellers. Basically, miniature lizardmen who also sometimes serve Kuo-toa, although since Muckdwellers' major habitat is a swamp and Kuo-toa are found in the underdark, I'm not sure when the twain get much of a chance to meet. They're 1' high, live in little tribe/clan groups, and don't do a whole lot with their time. I

suppose their value is in providing a low-level horde monster if the adventurers are taking on lizardmen, but aside from that...

Muckdwellers are social darwinists. If one of them gives the 'death bite' to a superior foe, he is lauded to the Muckdweller heavens. If he is killed by a bigger foe, though, he is forever shamed - which seem unduly harsh to me, but then again what do I know?

DMH

01-29-2009 08:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Like crabmen, muckdwellers have the potential to be more. I used a minor war between gripli and muckdwellers that didn't affect the PCs directly but rather caused all kinds of interesting spin offs throughout the swamp (ryling the trolls, drawing kech, damaging parts of the forest and annoying the druids). The gripli won because of their brains and enslaved the muckdwellers. I forgot what I did after that since it was ~18 years ago and 1e.

demiurge1138

01-30-2009 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The only thing that stands out to me about muckdwellers is how adorable they are. The illustration makes them look like a plush T. rex. Aww...

JRM

01-31-2009 01:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9905302)

Muckdweller

Never used them, and as they're described their pretty boring. Although with a little re-imagining perhaps something interesting could be made of them.

Hmm, perhaps Muckdwellers are a new race, and start overwhelming the swamp. They may be individually small and weak, but they're highly omnivorous and breed like rabbits. Being only 1' tall, perhaps an area of swamp that will sustain one 7' Lizard Man would feed 50-100 Muckdwellers. So if nothings done to stop them, an army of thousands of highly disciplined muckdwellers (Lawful Evil, remember), will surge out of the swamp to slaughter all the neighbouring sapients, planning to damn the rivers and dig out ponds to expand their beloved swampland.

Alternatively, the muckdwellers could develop a more sophisticated culture - they do have average intelligence, after all - and become a "power behind the throne" to the Lizard Men tribes. Everyone dismisses them because they're tiny and weak, but don't allow for them being devious little bastiches.

Also, I find it amusing that they leave all of their treasure **outside** of their cramped underwater tunnel lairs. Why would they do that? I guess they leave it on the surface so they can admire their "shiny-shinies" in the sunlight rather than to make it easy for regular sized adventurers to steal. Unless they want adventurers to steal

it, because it's Cursed...

noisms

02-01-2009 08:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Well, despite JRM's best efforts, Muckdwellers practically sank without a trace. Let's see how their conceptual relatives fare...

Mudman

One sentence in and the entry is already better than the last: "Mudmen are formed in pools of mud where enchanted rivers (even mildly enchanted ones, such as a stream eroding a magical structure) collect and evaporate and concentrate the dweomer." This is Good Stuff. It gets better:

Quote:

Because they are creatures of magic, mudmen are sometimes called dweomerlings. Mudmen are unintelligent life forces with but one goal -- to protect their pools against intruders.

When aroused into a physical form, mudmen take on the appearance of animated mud in a stocky humanoid shape about 4 feet tall. Their coloration varies between a dirty brown and tar black. They have four thick fingers on each hand. Their legs stay submerged within the pool, and are not usually visible. Their eyes are pools of jet black shadow. Mudmen speak no languages and are incapable of communicating with any living creature.

Evocative stuff from the MM writers and a shame it isn't backed up by good art.

I much prefer the name 'Dweomerlings' to Mudman and can't see why it wasn't chosen. Dweomer itself is a fantastic word, redolent of the more 'fantastical' boundaries of fantasy fiction - M. John Harrison, John Crowley and Gene Wolfe - and it gets my seal of approval as a word which should be used more (though not overused) in D&D. So henceforth Mudmen will be referred to as Dweomerlings.

There are two things I really like about Dweomerlings. First, their existence is part of the Gygaxian Naturalist flavour of the 2nd edition MM, hinting as it does at a living, breathing world outside of what the player characters are doing. Rivers flow and sometimes they flow over or past things that are magic: this is part of the rich tapestry of a fully-realised fantasy world and is happening all the time in the background. Tastes may differ but this is what I want from a D&D campaign setting.

Second, for once the designers managed to create a genuinely foreign, unfathomable monster. Dweomerlings want to protect their pools, and will kill anything they come across. They can't be communicated with or reasoned with. They have apparently no ambition other than to feed off the Dweomer which created them. They are properly alien: their impulses are not our own. D&D monsters should be more like that.

A big part of using Dweomerlings in a campaign is, I think, summed up in the question: what do you do with the magical mud once the Dweomerling is dead?

demiurge1138

02-01-2009 09:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9916362)

A big part of using Dweomerlings in a campaign is, I think, summed up in the question: what do you do with the magical mud once the Dweomerling is dead?

Magical mudpacks to be used in spas for high-level adventurers!

Clay golem creation!

Adobe buildings as impenetrable as iron!

Material components for stonewall!

The first ingredient in a poultice to turn stone to flesh!

EmperorSeth

02-01-2009 12:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Hey, loooooong time reader, first time writer. :) I'm disappointed I couldn't share my experiences earlier, or more accurately could but never could find the time to do so. For example, I had a great use of a Minotaur in my last adventure. Or rather, **The Minotaur** as House of Leaves readers know him as. He was part of a very convoluted Halloween-themed adventure I ran...in November and December. Sometime the player's schedules re-write things.

I can't remember ever seeing Mudmen (or Mudfolk, as I guess they would be called if they ever had a 3rd ed version,) in a game I played. I like the NAME dweomerlings, but honestly B-movie mud monsters don't sound like they earned it. I mean, they get it because they are creatures of magic? Unlike, say, 95% of the other monsters to date in this book?

Wakshaani

02-01-2009 12:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Dweomerling is more of a "High Name" while Mudmen is more of a "Low Name" ... most people will see a humanoid made of mud and go, "Hey, Mud Man"... Sages take the more refined naming structure, being all formal and stuffy like that.

Visually, the Mudmen of the Dragon's Lair videogame (And cartoon) are the way to go for these guys.

Thematically, they fit in great in any sort of long-abandoned magical dungeon environment... crying shame that they almost never get used and vanish in later editions. The closest in modern D&D would be "Living Spells".

noisms

02-01-2009 12:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 9916820)

*Hey, loooooong time reader, first time writer. :) I'm disappointed I couldn't share my experiences earlier, or more accurately could but never could find the time to do so. For example, I had a great use of a Minotaur in my last adventure. Or rather, **The Minotaur** as House of Leaves readers know him as. He was part of a very convoluted Halloween-themed adventure I ran...in November and December. Sometime the player's schedules re-write things.*

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Welcome to the thread. You make a good point about the Dweomerling moniker, but it's too good a name *not* to be used. Maybe it could be a general catch-all term for magical creatures or those which arise by accident due to magical processes?

Kakita Kojiro

02-01-2009 02:07 PM

Mudmen always reminded me, for some reason, of the *jheherrin* from the Land, in the Thomas Covenant chronicles of Steven Donaldson (specifically in "The Power that Preserves").

The *jheherrin*, or the "soft ones", were the misshapen survivors of Lord Foul's breeding experiments to create new life. He was not pleased with the results, and basically chucked them into his icky, magical mud waste dump -- and they ended up as oozy, mud-creatures. That were really, really pathetic both in the normal sense of that word and in that they inspire much pathos toward their sad lot in life.

JasonK

02-02-2009 05:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9916362)

I much prefer the name 'Dweomerlings' to Mudman and can't see why it wasn't chosen. Dweomer itself is a fantastical word, redolent of the more 'fantastical' boundaries of fantasy fiction - M. John Harrison, John Crowley and Gene Wolfe - and it gets my seal of approval as a word which should be used more (though not overused) in D&D. So henceforth Mudmen will be referred to as Dweomerlings.

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Second, for once the designers managed to create a genuinely foreign, unfathomable monster. Dweomerlings want to protect their pools, and will kill anything they come across. They can't be communicated with or reasoned with. They have apparently no ambition other than to feed off the Dweomer which created them. They are properly alien: their impulses are not our own. D&D monsters should be more like that.

I agree, wholeheartedly, with your first and second paragraphs, but I've got to disagree with your last. Partly because there are a couple of different creatures that have similar impulses - most notably various forms of undead

- and partly because... well... what do you do with that? I mean... ok, sure, they're fiercely protective of their little mudhole, and they're non-intelligent, so you have to give the PCs a reason to do down their mudhole (otherwise, they'd just avoid it, right?), but after that... it becomes a battle against mudpeople.

There's ways to spice up the fight ("you're sinking into the mud!"), there's ways to make an adventure out of it ("geologic change from that volcano you destroyed last year when you fought the red dragon is making the mudflats expand at an alarming rate; the mudpeople think this entire kingdom is theirs!"), but by making them non-intelligent, I think the designers ultimately made them... boring. :(

- jasön

DMH

02-02-2009 06:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9919067)

but by making them non-intelligent, I think the designers ultimately made them... boring. :(

Not only that, but that there is no difference between mudmen that form from different kinds of magic. There could be one for each school (and sphere?) or even combinations of schools. It could be complex, but some basic examples could help DMs who want to use mudmen and similar creatures extensively.

Wakshaani

02-02-2009 09:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9921512)

Not only that, but that there is no difference between mudmen that form from different kinds of magic. There could be one for each school (and sphere?) or even combinations of schools. It could be complex, but some basic examples could help DMs who want to use mudmen and similar creatures extensively.

Again, note the existence of modern-day "Living Spells".

Espresso

02-03-2009 07:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Gnomes and Kobolds are competing for exactly the same ecological niche and thus are pretty much doomed to inevitable conflict since one race tends good and the other evil.

Inyssi

02-03-2009 07:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Espresso (Post 9926832)

Gnomes and Kobolds are competing for exactly the same ecological niche and thus are pretty much doomed to inevitable conflict since one race tends good and the other evil.

True, but we're all the way over on Mudmen now.

Sleeper

02-03-2009 08:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 9926841)

True, but we're all the way over on Mudmen now.

I don't know....

Maybe gnomes and kobolds are just evolved mudmen? The gnomes are the mudmen created from wash surrounding stones imbued with the power of illusion. Elf hills masked with glamour by their fey denizens, invisible mile-high towers ruled by cabals of ancient mages, ruined mansions infested with ghouls who overlay the rotten decay with a more palatable seeming. That's why they're short and wizened, as well; the magic and beauty of gnomes is in the facade, not the reality.

Kobolds on the other hand are what happens when water washes through the Tomb of Horrors, flushing away the adventurer detritus, and makes its way out into the Great Swamp. The fetid mudpools bake under the sun for a while, and start to congeal, and swarm with mudmen like tadpoles. They continue to twist and shrink in the sun's dessicating rays, and the surface coating of mud dries, starts to flake, almost becomes scaly. Finally a tiny kobold staggers from the pools, puny but invested with magic of a thousand varieties, mind seething with its formative evil, turned and bent with an unnatural predilection toward traps and deception.

JRM

02-04-2009 06:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I like the basic concept of mudmen, but the execution left me a bit cold.

Here's an example from a campaign I ran years ago that hopefully illustrates the problem: The party comes across a pool of mud completely covering the entranceway of a dungeon, they wade in and mudmen start to rise from the mud, so immediately retreat to shore so they don't have to fight them while enmired. The mudmen sink back down again, since they only emerge when threats are in their pool. So, the party's toughest fighter wades into the pool while the others stay on the bank. They start shooting missiles and spells as soon as the mudmen appear, and knock off a lot of them before they one gets close enough to throw itself at the fighter and immobilize him. So, they just chuck a rope around him and haul him ashore then scrape the mud off, wait until he's recovered his breath and repeat the exercise

to destroy the rest of the mudmen.

Now, they had never met mudmen before and I know for a fact that the players had not seen their stats (The relevant MM had just been released and I was the only person who bothered buying & reading such things). It just is an obvious approach to dealing with such an adversary. They're slow-moving and never leave their pools - they don't really represent a threat.

If I was writing up such a monster nowadays, it would likely go something like this.

A Dweomerling, also known as a Mudman, has only a dim sentience (Animal- or Semi-intelligent?) which is focused entirely on absorbing magical energies dissolved in their pool. They can use the spells *locate object* and *detect magic* at will. Most of the time, they are spread in a thin layer on the bottom of their pools, the better to feed off its dweomer. If a dweomerling senses any magic with its *detect magic* it will coalesce into their dweomerling form and pursue it, seeking to acquire the magic object and return with it to their pool in order to increase its dweomer. Since dweomerling move very slowly, it's easy to outrun them but they're relentless, and will travel up to (ten or twenty miles?) from their pool before fatigue forces them to return to their pool. Its *locate objects* ability means that a party which has escaped a dweomerling will often be surprised by one hours later when it shambles into their camp. A dweomerling will also form if a non-magical intruder enters its pool, but in such occasions they will only retain their anthropoidal form until the intruder is slain or leaves the pool. The dweomerling will pursue the most powerful dweomer it can detect. If there are multiple mudmen and multiple dweomers, they will all pursue the same object until one or more of them has acquire it, whereupon those dweomerlings will return to the pool and the remaining dweomerlings will pursue the next most powerful magical item they sensed.

A dweomerling can squeeze through the tiniest of gaps, since it is formed from liquid mud. Thus, doors and pallsades will not stop ones' pursuit. Weapon blows have no effect on a being made from living mud, since their "flesh" simply flows back into shape immediately after being struck. Most magic spells actually make the dweomerling stronger (plus 1 temporary hit point per spell level?) as the mudman absorbs the dweomer used against it, with the exception of the following - *dispel magic* does 5d6 damage to a dweomerling, an *antimagic shell* instantly destroys one.

However, non-magical fire and liquid does damage to dweomerling by dehydrating or washing away their bodies. Extinguishing a torch in a mudman or emptying a waterskin over one does 1d4 damage, flaming oil does normal damage, totally immersing a mudman in running water does 2d6 damage per round. Magical fire and water does not harm a mudman, since the dweomer they absorb from the magic is balances the damage they would have suffered. However such spells will *slow* a dweomerling for one round per dice of damage they would have suffered, since the magic temporarily makes their body too stiff or soft for them to move easily.

A dweomerling can throw parts of its body as described in the MM, but when it gets within ten feet and throws itself at the opponent that doesn't kill the dweomerling, instead it flows itself around the victim's body (so it's an adventurer inside a dweomerling!) to suffocate him. Multiple dweomerlings can combine to coat a victim at the same time, any damage inflicted to them is evenly divided between them.

The engulfed character or their allies can scrape enough mud off their face to breathe by making an Strength check (-2 per additional dweomerling), but this only lasts one round before the mud flows back, if they can make three such rolls in succession they can scrape pull the engulfed victim free of the dweomerling.

If the dweomerling is attacking to gain a magical item, they will only engulf the victim long enough to acquire said item. If this is something they cannot easily remove from their target (e.g. a suit of armour), they will drag the victim back to their pools at half their normal speed, or full speed if two or more mudmen are carrying the victim.

A dweomerlings' pool often contains magical items (treasure type ?) and the remains of their victims.

EDIT: I think this concept of the mudman offers far more adventuring possibilities - an implacable foe who pursues the party through through locked doors and portculli, a creature that carries of their favourite magic item, ignoring weapon blows and spells, which they need to pursue and discover how to destroy it. A horrible creature which appeared from the cursed woods to throttle the town's wizard after he returns from adventuring in said woods (maybe it also recovered a magic item said wizard stole from its pool?), then carried off the wizard's corpse - then the townsfolk hire the PCs to recover the wizard's body for *raise dead* (so they have an X day time limit, because the local cleric only has a Y level *raise dead* scroll).

noisms

02-04-2009 08:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

JRM: Almost like the Terminator, in a way. I like the trope of the Relentless Single Minded Enemy - Aliens, zombies, The Thing, the Borg... Your Mudmen are like a D&D riff on that.

Mr. Teapot

02-04-2009 09:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9929672)

EDIT: I think this concept of the mudman offers far more adventuring possibilities - an implacable foe who pursues the party through through locked doors and portculli, a creature that carries of their favourite magic item, ignoring weapon blows and spells, which they need to pursue and discover how to destroy it.

Giving mudmen a motivation for doing something is necessary to make them an interesting encounter. As they are written, mudmen are almost deliberately dull. (they sit still until someone enters area X, then they attack until the intruder leaves or the mudmen dies. Like any other D&D monster played by an uncreative DM, really.) They need something to make them act or otherwise be dynamic or interesting. Stealing magic items fits their background well and is fairly interesting.

The proposed mechanics are very fiddly, though. I hate it when monsters or spells reference specific other spells like that: what if I have some other spell that should affect mud? Why am I punished for using spells not in the Player's Handbook?

noisms

02-04-2009 09:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mummy

Ah, King Tut - yet another undead creature with a hatred for all living things which drives them to attack without mercy. I'm sure more interesting things can be done with Mummies - bargaining with them to hunt down treasure thieves in exchange for one's life, or taking a message to their still living descendents.

I'd also rather like to see Andean or Asian variants on the Mummy. An entire cult of Tibetan-style mummified monks would be a great inclusion in a game - still occupying the same temple that they had lived in for millennia, long after the living members of their order had all died out...

Best of all would be [self-mummified](#) mummies. I've actually seen a couple of these at a temple in Yamagata prefecture, in the Northwest of Japan. (They are known as [Sokushinbutsu](#) - one who has attained Buddhahood in death, distinct from Sokushinseibutsu who attain it while still alive. 'Self-mummified' isn't strictly accurate as the monks who carried the process out had help from their colleagues. Basically they would deliberately starve and poison themselves over the course of several years until they had no remaining body fat and their bodies were too toxic to be attractive to maggots. Then they would entomb themselves with the help of the other monks, and wait to die of starvation. Extraordinary stuff. I'm imagining the hate, anger and thirst for murder that such a monk would feel after the disappointment of realising he not only didn't become a Bodhisattva but had also only guaranteed for himself an

enternity of unliving existence.

Anyway, Mummies are *tough*: they resist most of the common magic spells a party would cast at them, take no damage from ordinary weapons, only half damage from magical ones, and their attacks cause the always-fatal rotting disease. Their only problem is their vulnerability to fire, though, which every player of D&D surely knows. The old player knowledge vs. character knowledge problem rears its head again.

Wakshaani

02-04-2009 11:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Of course, going back to the well **again**, using some of the Ancient Races (Lizardmen, Bullywugs, etc) as mummies makes for interesting storystuff. One thing to encounter an Egyptian Mummy and everyone ho-hums a bit, but, when you run into a Lizardfolk Mummy in the middle of the desert and have all of these Sebek-head statues around, people start to go, 'Hey... there's some backstory here that we don't know about...' and mysteries grow.

Big bonuses, regardless, for taking standard magic item treasures and putting an Egyptian, or ancient Race, twist on 'em.

sim_james

02-04-2009 12:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Non-human mummies *are* visually more appealing and interesting; it reinjects some "otherness" into the mummy, which has become way too familiar due to overexposure.

I like the Sokushinbutsu idea - but what if these mummies weren't filled with hate? Serene and in perfect peace, they inflict the living with mummy rot as a *gift* - a disease that replicates the starvation and gradual toxification of the flesh that they endured. When the sufferer dies, no vermin will touch their body. Mummy rot as forced enlightenment.

Fitzgrunion

02-04-2009 12:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It took several days but I've finally read the approximately 2800 posts of this behemoth. It actually got me off my arse to register after (counts on fingers...) -too many years. I was actually last active on these boards last century when 2e was current.

Mudme... sorry, Dweomerlings are awesome -Byproducts of a Magical Ecology (Magicology?). I can see a particularly corrupt evil wizard deliberately releasing vast quantities of Magic Waste (possibly the run-off from his industrial-scale mummy-embalming facility) into the waterways upstream from peaceful civilised folk where the pollutant can animate mud wherever it settles.

Dweomerlings can never be minions per se. They're unintelligent, but they can be unleashed like a sticky, smelly scourge. The same evil archmage could induce spontaneous generation of dweomerlings through nefarious means in an area of elevated terrain (and here I am imagining a scene where underlings -preferably Broken Ones or Mongrelmen/folk are dumping drums of noxious stuff into a pristine wetland) then when the Mudmen have coalesced utilise some kind of earthshaking magics and control weather to deliver the Dweomerlings downhill as part of a lahar (mudslide). Villages are buried by natural disaster. Chaos ensues. And the rescue efforts are severely hampered.

Bestiaries are, for me, the most inspiring rpg books. One of the major revelations of this thread is that the potential inherent in worlds with dozens of sentient species has been vastly underused. Another is that there is wonderful scope

for a campaign set around the Royal Teratological Society.

Sleeper

02-04-2009 01:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Welcome back, Fitzgrunion.

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 9931268)

Non-human mummies are visually more appealing and interesting; it reinjects some "otherness" into the mummy, which has become way too familiar due to overexposure.

I kind of agree, and kind of disagree. Mummies have become too familiar, but there's still plenty of play left in the human mummy. The prevailing mummy stereotype is very specific. The Boris Karlov 1932 version is still alive and well, lumbering along, wrapped in surgical bandage, and with all that Egyptian baggage. Cliches are there because they work, but when they're overdone it's time to start subverting them. Look at how much play *28 Days Later* got out of simply speeding up zombies. The Brendan Frasier movies made the mummy more dynamic, which helped, but there's always room to go further. Noisms had the right approach, drawing from different mythos. How many Peruvian mummies show up in fiction? Not a lot, compared to the Egyptian kind. Xander's bad choice in girlfriends aside, they're pretty rare.

Or just do original riffs. One idea I find fascinating is the bodies preserved in sphagnum bogs. The bog is cold, and acid, and anaerobic. Ritually murdered bodies dumped in the water last for a long time. The skin tans, the bones slowly disintegrate, but the flesh remains almost untouched, including internal organs. That could make a terrifying scenario. Hidden away in the bogs, a cult has been murdering people for centuries. Finally, when the stars are auspicious, a great eerie horn is heard by the villagers, followed by the slow and steady beat of great drums from a dozen scattered locations around the verge. The water starts shifting. The crest of a wave precedes them. Swarming brown bodies, vacant black eyes. Perfectly preserved, but tanned as if by a lifetime of sun. Their bones have started to disintegrate from the acid. Many can only swim, or roll. Their bodies becoming a weapon, enveloping those in the way. Others are like broken stick figures. Arms at weird angles, heads lolling against their chests, legs broken off at the knee.

The least mobile ones could be imagined as a kind of ooze. A rolling mass of partially deliquesced human bodies, tanned and leathery and slimy and cold, bones cracking as they roll over and wrap victims in the folds of their flesh.

JohnBiles

02-04-2009 01:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9930465)

Giving mudmen a motivation for doing something is necessary to make them an interesting encounter. As they are written, mudmen are almost deliberately dull. (they sit still until someone enters area X, then they attack until the intruder leaves or the mudmen dies. Like any other D&D monster played by an uncreative DM, really.) They need something to make them act or otherwise be dynamic or interesting. Stealing magic items fits their background well and is fairly interesting.

One of Steven Donaldson's Thomas Covenant books (Book 1 of the Second Trilogy, The Wounded Land), have two variations on the basic concept of mudmen:

The Skest are acidic mudmen who serve the living evil spirit of the Sarangrave, a giant swamp tainted by millenia of the magical equivalent of industrial waste. Said living evil spirit / swamp monster is known as the Lurker and it uses the Skest as hunting hounds to drive people into the lakes and rivers where it can attack with its tentacles. The Skest have enough acid in their mud that they basically hug you and acid burn you to death.

The Party (Thomas Covenant and buddies) are saved by the Sur-Jeherrin, mud creatures who resemble animals made of mud, who fight the Skest by basically grappling them, absorbing their acid and then dissolving back into mud until the acid disperses into the water and they can reform. They do this though it hurts because a Giant had saved them from their millenia of misery and imprisonment in Lord Foul's Creche back at the end of the first trilogy (and Covenant is travelling with Giants, among other people).

The Sarangrave would make a kickass place for a D&D adventure for high level people.

JohnBiles

02-04-2009 01:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9872018)

[u][size="5"]

Chief Mold Men have a similar attack to Russet Molds, i.e. they can release spores which kill you and turn you into another Mold Man, with 4 HD. It has only just occurred to me that this must surely mean victims have to shrink (or grow) to 3.5 feet. Try explaining that.

Not that hard; the spores consume you and build a vegpeygmy out of the flesh; if you have too much flesh, some of it is wasted as byproduct bits; if you don't have enough, you start out as a short one.

noisms

02-04-2009 02:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Fitzgrunion (Post 9931272)

It took several days but I've finally read the approximately 2800 posts of this behemoth. It actually got me off my arse to register after (counts on fingers...) -too many years. I was actually last active on these boards last century when 2e was current.

Wow, I suppose I have to take responsibility (blame?) for that. ;)

Quote:

Bestiaries are, for me, the most inspiring rpg books. One of the major revelations of this thread is that the potential inherent in worlds with dozens of sentient species has been vastly underused. Another is that there is wonderful scope for a campaign set around the Royal Teratological Society.

Absolutely. A Royal Teratological Society game using the ideas from this thread would just be brilliant. I'd quite like a campaign in which all the characters play sages, who spend the whole time running away from and dodging hideous beasts while attempting to study them - rather than fight or kill them.

Wakboth

02-04-2009 03:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9931385)

Or just do original riffs. One idea I find fascinating is the bodies preserved in sphagnum bogs. The bog is cold, and acid, and anaerobic. Ritually murdered bodies dumped in the water last for a long time. The skin tans, the bones slowly disintegrate, but the flesh remains almost untouched, including internal organs. That could make a terrifying scenario. Hidden away in the bogs, a cult has been murdering people for centuries. Finally, when the stars are auspicious, a great eerie horn is heard by the villagers, followed by the slow and steady beat of great drums from a dozen scattered locations around the verge. The water starts shifting. The crest of a wave precedes them. Swarming brown bodies, vacant black eyes. Perfectly preserved, but tanned as if by a lifetime of sun. Their bones have started to disintegrate from the acid. Many can only swim, or roll. Their bodies becoming a weapon, enveloping those in the way. Others are like broken stick figures. Arms at weird angles, heads lolling against their chests, legs broken off at the knee.

The least mobile ones could be imagined as a kind of ooze. A rolling mass of partially deliquesced human bodies, tanned and leathery and slimy and cold, bones cracking as they roll over and wrap victims in the folds of their flesh.

This is a good one! And the stereotypical mummy rot seems more appropriate with bog-mummies, somehow. (I'm one of those who liked the change in 3e; now, the mummy rot makes you dry up and crumble like sand...)

Or - chilly, freeze-dried mummies from the Northern mountains - an army of undead Ice Age people, finally roused from their eternal sleep by some despoiling of their ancient lands. Can you find out what's wrong, and placate them before the wave of Cold Ones devastates the entire kingdom?

Or or - Salt mummies from a place like the Dead Sea? You could borrow the story of Sodom for that; an ancient city or civilization of such iniquity and evil that gods blasted them off the face of the world, leaving the area dead and barren with salt and sulphur. But not everyone was caught in the cities, and these shriveled husks of ancient evil have a smoldering hatred of the gods and their servants...

demiurge1138

02-04-2009 04:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9931385)
Welcome back, Fitzgrunion.

I kind of agree, and kind of disagree. Mummies have become too familiar, but there's still plenty of play left in the human mummy. The prevailing mummy stereotype is very specific. The Boris Karlov 1932 version is still alive and well, lumbering along, wrapped in surgical bandage, and with all that Egyptian baggage.

Well, that's the thing, isn't it? The lumbering bandage-wrapped mummy is only in *The Mummy* with Boris Karloff for... a minute? For most of that movie's length, the mummy is just a very dry, very evil, foreigner/sorcerer. Which, I think, is a much more interesting archetype for mummies. Scheming mummies, I think, should be competitive with vampires.

JRM

02-04-2009 06:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9930465)

Giving mudmen a motivation for doing something is necessary to make them an interesting encounter. As they are written, mudmen are almost deliberately dull. (they sit still until someone enters area X, then they attack until the intruder leaves or the mudmen dies. Like any other D&D monster played by an uncreative DM, really.) They need something to make them act or otherwise be dynamic or interesting. Stealing magic items fits their background well and is fairly interesting.

Ta Mr Teapot, that was pretty much my thinking about the original mudmen. Kamikaze animated mudpies just didn't engage me. However lives on magic auras -> attracted to magic items -> attacks people with magic items is a pretty obvious line of deduction which gives them a believable motivation for doing something that would concern or interest a bunch of PCs.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9930465)

The proposed mechanics are very fiddly, though. I hate it when monsters or spells reference specific other spells like that: what if I have some other spell that should affect mud? Why am I punished for using spells not in the Player's Handbook?

Well it is a rough draft, I was just riffing off how spells affect (or, rather, don't affect) golems, which are also magically animated entities that are very hard to deal with via spells. A spell-caster can still slow the dweomerling down with fire or water, and help their companions wail on it with buckets of water or flaming oil flasks. It's pretty true to the AD&D ethos to have a monster that is highly resistant to the abilities of one half or the "spells and swords" classes.

Although I'm a bit embarrassed to have forgotten mud affecting spells? Clearly, *mud to rock* will petrify mudmen (possibly all of them if you cast it on their pool), but what does *rock to mud* do? Would it make them stronger because they temporarily absorb the earth around them?

I was a bit more concerned about the smothering mechanisms - they'll have the mud-chucking reducing the targets move, then the engulfing reducing the engulfed victim's, then Strength checks to try to escape (I

thought about Open Doors checks instead, but that would make it too difficult for weak characters to escape), adjusted by the number of Mudmen, and they'd have suffocation rules applying. That all seems rather complicated, so I'm wondering whether there's an easier approach.

JasonK

02-04-2009 06:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9931875)

Well, that's the thing, isn't it? The lumbering bandage-wrapped mummy is only in The Mummy with Boris Karloff for... a minute? For most of that movie's length, the mummy is just a very dry, very evil, foreigner/sorcerer. Which, I think, is a much more interesting archetype for mummies. Scheming mummies, I think, should be competitive with vampires.

Man, I am so amazingly with you. It's a tragedy that the standard D&D mummy is a shambler. It's a total waste.

Because here's the deal with mummies:

A thousand years ago and more, in an age when man's first kindgoms were on the rise (after the fall of the lizardfolk, et al.) and names like Kaz and Vecna had yet to become legend, there arose priest-kings of great and terrible power. So mighty were they, such great servants, that their gods vouchsafed for them a most holy gift. The common men - the architects, the farmers, the slave laborers; the ones who built and lived in the shadow of the grand pyramids - they thought the gift was to be nothing less than eternal life. They are fools.

The true gift is all the years after death and before the priest-king lives again. Those are the years when, enshrined in paradise in the Fields of Rushes, the eternal soul of the priest-kings sat scribe at the foot of the gods, learned their wisdom first-hand, being succored upon power in preparation for their eventual return.

The tragic curse, the terrible rage, of every mummy is not that they are undead; they were expecting that. It's not that they thirst for blood or souls or life; they are gifted with the power of their gods, what need have they for mortal essence? It is that the world has forgotten the way of righteousness, the way that they spent a lifetime building into their monuments and an eternity after life learning better.

The world has forgotten, but it will remember again, oh yes, and will kneel at the feet of the living gods.

- jasön

JRM

02-04-2009 06:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9930402)

JRM: Almost like the Terminator, in a way. I like the trope of the Relentless Single Minded Enemy - Aliens, zombies, The Thing, the Borg... Your Mudmen are like a D&D riff on that.

Yes, the Relentless Single Minded Enemy was an inspiration.

It can not feel pain,
it can not be hurt,
it does not feel pity or mercy,
it wants your magical items,
And it absolutely will not stop.

For many PCs a nigh-indestructable monster that wants to steal/destroy their magical items is more frightening than one that just wants to kill them. I prefer the Dweomerling approach of stealing an item to a creature like a Disenchanter. My proposed revised Mudman gives the player's motivation for adventure (track down the dweomerlings pool to recover their magic), rather than just "the DM wants to destroy your toys" approach of the Disenchanter, which rightly riles some players.

On the few occasions when I let my players acquire overly powerful magic items I just lived with it and/or let events deal with them (e.g. a *rope of entanglement* turned out to be far too effective a "party wins" button, until its owner used it to tie together two stone golems, who snapped it like a piece of twine.)

I also wondered about a "Greater Dweomerling" that had absorbed so much magic it had additional powers and intelligence, maybe it contained dweomers powerful enough it could wander about indefinitely in a quest to absorb magic?

JRM

02-04-2009 06:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9930504)

Mummy

But why must they hate the living? What about helpful mummies:

The Ancestors may be terrible and cruel (i.e. still LE), but they love their people. When the barbarians (orcs? CE heart-sacrificing foreigners? imperialists?) came to our lands and the time of torment started, we called upon heroes (the PCs obviously) to find and penetrate their hidden tombs, to perform the Rite of the Leaves and beseech the Ancestors to return to their bodies from their Afterlife and bring the Rotting Curse down upon those who oppress us.

Sleeper

02-04-2009 07:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9931771)

Or - chilly, freeze-dried mummies from the Northern mountains - an army of undead Ice Age people, finally roused from their eternal sleep by some despoiling of their ancient lands. Can you find out what's wrong, and placate them before the wave of Cold Ones devastates the entire kingdom

And of course there are those preserved woolly mammoth specimens. They might be mounts, or half-eaten terrified mummies driven before the spear- and fire- wielding early humans slain, and then resurrected by their slayers in a animistic ritual. Or perhaps the elephants were sapient, slow but thoughtful. And they've come back in their quiet way to avenge the genocide of their species and many others at the hands of hunting packs of humans during the Holocene.

Another interesting idea to steal is the Siberian ice maiden. Believed to be a shaman from the 5th century BC(E), she was mummified and then frozen along with six horses and a man. They both had vivid blue tattoos of animals, some real some imaginary, on their bodies. Mother of winter. Primeval magic, loosed upon the world.
Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9931875)

Well, that's the thing, isn't it? The lumbering bandage-wrapped mummy is only in The Mummy with Boris Karloff for... a minute? For most of that movie's length, the mummy is just a very dry, very evil, foreigner/sorcerer. Which, I think, is a much more interesting archetype for mummies. Scheming mummies, I think, should be competitive with vampires.

Another thing that gets forgotten is that in a lot of ways, it makes more sense to have the mummies be the guardians of the tomb, not the master of the tomb. All those ritually preserved soldiers and guards forced to waken into an unpleasant undead state to prevent their master from being disturbed, their spirits pulled harshly from basking in the reward of the afterlife.

That might make an interesting adventure. The master might be evil and powerful. A pharaoh, a living god become a real god after death. An Acerak-like figure spending his time beyond the veil, ruling his kingdom in the great beyond among the gods and the hordes of less worthy dead. The simple mummies are his personal guards, who desperately try to prevent the PCs from waking his ancient arrogant evil, because if he wakes he will be... perturbed. And cause untold disruption in the living world. In other words, finishing the dungeon means the PCs lose :).

Fitzgrunion

02-04-2009 07:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I am very enamoured of diversifying the cultural origins as well as the physical processes giving rise to mummies. The Salt, Ice and Bog variants would work very nicely as aesthetic changes from the tired pseudo-Egyptian dusty variety.

The proto-Scythian kurgan builders mummified their nobility, a cultural group renowned for their cavalry, particularly horse archers. It would be nice to see a mummy that didn't just shamle but had an undead steed to bear it forth with some alacrity.

There's also the old horrible practice of entombing wives, concubines and slaves to serve the noble in the afterlife - these could rise too. If you were feeling particularly fiendish you could say that the slaves were entombed alive and cursed their malefactor so that it could be heard beyond the tomb etc. so that it would produce a Living Wall.

btw the Mummy picture is actively awful. exactly zero imagination and idividuality went into it's construction.

Noisms, what happened to the rating system for the art?

Fitzgrunion

02-04-2009 07:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9932298)

And of course there are those preserved woolly mammoth specimens. .

There's a bit in Solzhenitzyn's *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* where starving gulag inmates thaw, cook and eat some primordial amphibian from the permafrost. There were, if I remember correctly, accounts of Siberian peasants eating 20,000 year old frozen mammoth during famines following the 1917 revolution.

This gives rise to the possibility of *original* authentic Elder Race mummies. I second (or third) the call for more non-human mummies because 50,000 year old Bullywug Mummies are cool.

There are at least three dinosaur mummies in existence, even though they aren't strictly speaking mummies proper, there's got to be potential for something epic.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9932298)

Another interesting idea to steal is the Siberian ice maiden. Believed to be a shaman from the 5th century BC(E) .

Tattooed Ice Maiden mummies are just too good not to be the Big Bad of someone's campaign!

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9932298)

Another thing that gets forgotten is that in a lot of ways, it makes more sense to have the mummies be the guardian of the tomb, not the master of the tomb. All .

At the same time it is a kind of bitter poetic justice that the hubris of a mighty Pharaoh who wants to live forever so bad they'll condemn half a civilisation to the toilsome construction of an artificial mountain is rewarded with transformation into what? A shambling disease-mongering idiot.

Admittedly greater Mummies are much cooler.

consistently excellent ideas btw, Sleeper

Sleeper

02-04-2009 08:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

That's an interesting bit on Solzhenitsyn. I also heard a rumor at one point about a group of scientists who debated eating a piece of preserved flesh before it became too rotten to try. I forget whether it was a mammoth or something else. I think they decided not to, but what if they did? Sympathetic magic and bad horror movies suggest that that's *wrong*, the kind of act that will have unnatural consequences. They might start to revert, change. Become

neanderthals, or were-dire wolves, or grow giant saber-toothed fangs. Wake the wendigo.

You could even make the threat something other than mummies. Particularly in the frozen specimens and the bog mummies, even the stomach contents are preserved. Their might be seeds of some early plant, that sprout. Shoots burst from the corpse, and start spreading. A new invasive species, that threatens the modern world.

Or diseases. Plagues from beyond, magical hoary old things like the purported threat from smallpox in Russia, where infected corpses were buried in the permafrosted tundra. If they're dug up, the plague might be released again to haunt the world. Or the magical analogs of plagues, perhaps a plague of vampires or shadows.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Fitzgrunion (Post 9932377)

There are at least three dinosaur mummies in existence, even though they aren't strictly speaking mummies proper, there's got to be potential for something epic.

"Mummy" is very misleading term in those cases. Willo is still a case of full mineralization, it's just the fossilization process actually preserved some of the soft tissue as well as bone. More interesting perhaps are the *Tyrannosaurus* specimens where some traces of the original soft tissue (collagen) were found inside larger bones, like the femur.

Quote:

At the same time it is a kind of bitter poetic justice that the hubris of a mighty Pharaoh who wants to live forever so bad they'll condemn half a civilisation to the toilsome construction of an artificial mountain is rewarded with transformation into what? A shambling disease-mongering idiot.

It doesn't have to be condemnation, if they're right. In our world evidence of the afterlife is at best slippery; in the standard D&D mythos it's regularly achievable and easily verified. The goal might be to protect and ward their people, in the afterlife. If they don't achieve divinity, who will create the blessed realm of the dead, and create a paradise to prevent their subjects from being cast among all the malignant spirits of the dead?

This might make desecration of tombs very morally problematic. Enter the tomb, and the mummified tomb guardians are roused to protect their master. If they're injured, that's a problem. The wounds will be reflected in their eternal spiritual bodies, forever. Eternity marred by eternally seeping, unhealable wounds. And if they're slain, they're cast from the perfect realm into the equivalent of Hell or Hades, where the unprotected spirits run wild and are subject to unimaginable horrors. Your act of tomb robbing costs someone Paradise. Even worse, if the mistress is roused, all the spirits that their divinity protects in the afterlife, her former subjects, are unprotected. The longer she's away, the more innocent spirits who are hauled off to the nasty part of the afterlife, perhaps forever. And if she's destroyed, then you've basically consigned an entire generation of her nation to perpetual torment.

Wakshaani

02-04-2009 10:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9932148)

I was a bit more concerned about the smothering mechanisms - they'll have the mud-chucking reducing the targets move, then the engulfing reducing the engulfed victim's, then Strength checks to try to escape (I thought about Open Doors checks instead, but that would make it too difficult for weak characters to escape), adjusted by the number of

Mudmen, and they'd have suffocation rules applying. That all seems rather complicated, so I'm wondering whether there's an easier approach.

Give 'em Improved Grapple for starters .. the initial hits don't do much, after all, but they *do* make teh Mudmen stick to you, in essence.

Then give them a **Suffocation** (ex) ability: If the Mudman starts the round grappling a foe, it may attempt to pin it as per normal grapple rolls. A foe pinned by a Mudman starts to suffocate as per the drowning rules.

Taa-daa. All teh rules are already taken care of. The "Hurl Mud" needs a rule of it's own, but, otherwise, you're good to go.

Wakshaani

02-04-2009 10:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

As for Mummies, yeah, you get several layers with one ... a Greater Mummy, who would be a noble of some kind, tho you could also use Lich for such a state (You already have a 'phylacetry' of sorts in panopic jars!), or even a normal member of teh race that's effectively immortal and has just been sleeping until teh tomb awakes. *or* the master of teh house is a ghost with Possession, waiting for someone to come inside whose body they could take over, their spirit unable to move to the afterlife, so, they want to be born anew... and they don't really care who they have to kick out to do it. (What's that Ed? you can't make the game this week? Need me to run you as an NPC? Oh, don't worry, I think that can be arranged...)

Below the master you have common mummies, who were high-placed guards, wives, or vassals, then zombies or, better, skeletons who were servants or maybe soldiers.

Of course, if you want a small change, replace the skellies with Animated Object: Statues, and have a bunch of terrecota soldiers ready to serve teh will of their lord when he awakes.

Motivation of lost religion is always a good one ... the cultures that produced teh Mummy are probably Lawful, or at least the religion was, so, Good, Neutral, or Evil, they could very well want to impose their old ways on the new world "For thier own good" ... after all, teh Mummy was a Divine King, touched by (Diety X) himself! CLEARLY he was kept around to share his Noble Wisdom with this strange modern world and respark the worship of teh True Faith. Now, he just needs to gather his army...

noisms

02-04-2009 10:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Fitzgrunion (Post 9932321)

btw the Mummy picture is actively awful. exactly zero imagination and idividuality went into it's construction.

Noisms, what happened to the rating system for the art?

That kind of fell by the wayside. I'll resurrect it, mummy-like, for the rest of the thread.

YojimboC

02-04-2009 10:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

This is why I love this thread! Muckdwellers and mud-men be damned; bog, ice, and kurgan mummies rock, and rock hard.

I used a lizardfolk mummy in an ancient prison (ie, a prison built by the setting's ancients) designed to contain the worst villains in history.

I also used an Andean style mummy on an isolated island, miles from civilization or healing magic. Lucky for the PCs, nobody got mummy rot.

Speaking of Andean mummies, the Incas mummified their dead rulers... and *kept them around*. They didn't bury them in tombs. Dead rulers maintained their own courts, and had followers who continued to use them as figureheads to bolster their political aims. The Spanish took advantage of this, and its one of the reasons why the Incas lost, despite a numerical and territorial advantage.

Anyway, in D&D, those mummified rulers aren't just bodies... they're ambulatory, intelligent, and they've got their own ideas on how the country should be run. So each new emporer in turn must deal with their unliving ancestors and their demands, but they're also there to offer advice and to step up and defend the empire when necessary. And every new emporer knows that their own fate will one day be to join the legion of mummies...

Sleeper

02-04-2009 11:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Another possible inspiration is the Gods of Lankhmar (distinguished from the Gods *in* Lankhmar, whose worshippers throng the Street of the Gods like lice). The Gods *of* Lankhmar aren't really worshipped in any sense. Revered, yes. But mostly feared. These ancestors of the lords of Lankhmar are the dark center of the city's faith. When the city is threatened, they take to the streets. Rods and black bones, jewels and hideously rotted faces. People flee from the procession, and the enemy is demolished. Or when their status as the preeminent center of the city, the locus around which everything revolves, is threatened by an upstart god, they destroy that as well — raze the temple to the ground, and slay all the priests. Fiercely protective of what's their's, and jealous of their prerogatives.

JRM

02-04-2009 11:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9932869)

*Give 'em Improved Grapple for starters .. the initial hits don't do much, after all, but they *do* make teh Mudmen stick to you, in essence.*

*Then give them a **Suffocation** (ex) ability: If the Mudman starts the round grappling a foe, it may attempt to pin it as per normal grapple rolls. A foe pinned by a Mudman starts to suffocate as per the drowning rules.*

Taa-daa. All teh rules are already taken care of. The "Hurl Mud" needs a rule of it's own, but, otherwise, you're good to go.

That's what I'd have done if this was a 3rd edition thread, but since we're talking about 2E here I was basing the combat description on the more freeform exception-based rules of that edition's **Monstrous Manual**.

Wakshaani

02-04-2009 11:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9933181)

*That's what I'd have done if this was a 3rd edition thread, but since we're talking about 2E here I was basing the combat description on the more freeform exception-based rules of that edition's **Monstrous Manual**.*

Oh lordy. If you want to do **that**, I'll just curl up quietly in a corner and weep, WEEP for you. :)

Sleeper

02-05-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9933223)

*Oh lordy. If you want to do **that**, I'll just curl up quietly in a corner and weep, WEEP for you. :)*

Oh, exception based rules can be very, very easy...

"Your character has a 15% chance plus 1% per additional mudman of suffocating every round. A suffocating character dies in 3 rounds."

No messy THAC0, saves, no mention of whether or not you can act while suffocating... just pure randomness based on the number of attackers :).

Edivad

02-05-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9932222)

But why must they hate the living? What about helpful mummies:

As an opponent of the "undeath is EVIL because you are extending your existence instead of respecting the natural limits of your life" thing, I agree.

While the mind(probably 'soul'is a better term)of a mummy would be quite changed compared to it's former life, I think it's perfectly feasible to keep the old alignment, so I really can't see what's wrong with Neutral or Good mummies.

Unlike other intelligent undeads such as ghouls and vampires, there's nothing really 'predatory'about mummies - they don't hunt the living but seem to be happy guarding their tombs - although even Good mummies will probably NOT appreciate when so-called adventurers(more like...grave robbers ;)) break into its home in search of treasure.

It could be interesting if the mummy talked with the intruders and rather than outright attacking(especially if it has some way to sense their intentions), perhaps asking them perform a quest or service in exchange for some of it's treasure - after all an undead might always have some 'unfinished business' from its mortal life.

Also one small detail I noticed - while a mummy would never pass for a living human(unlike a vampire), appearance-wise it's more...tolerable than something like a ghoul or zombie - it retains its human shape, can be covered in bandages and probably doesn't stink horribly. It might have a neuter, possibly pleasant smell, depending on the substances used in embalming the body. Mummies could be guarding holy sites and temples or even walk around the living, and they probably wouldn't be considered horrifying, especially once you get used to them.

Oh, and by the way: I really enjoy this series of threads - it's really fascinating and inspiring, full of good trivia, ideas and theories that can be used for plot hooks. Keep the monsters coming!

JRM

02-05-2009 12:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9932455)

This might make desecration of tombs very morally problematic. Enter the tomb, and the mummified tomb guardians are roused to protect their master. If they're injured, that's a problem. The wounds will be reflected in their eternal spiritual bodies, forever. Eternity marred by eternally seeping, unhealable wounds. And if they're slain, they're cast from the perfect realm into the equivalent of Hell or Hades, where the unprotected spirits run wild and are subject to unimaginable horrors. Your act of tomb robbing costs someone Paradise. Even worse, if the mistress is roused, all the spirits that their divinity protects in the afterlife, her former subjects, are unprotected. The longer she's away, the more innocent spirits who are hauled off to the nasty part of the afterlife, perhaps forever. And if she's destroyed, then you've basically consigned an entire generation of her nation to perpetual torment.

That reminds me, many years ago I did some work on a "reverse dungeon" type one-shot adventure where the PCs were (mostly) undead who'd been roused from the afterlife because some adventurers had plundered their tomb. They basically had until the next full moon to recover the magical/blessed artifacts, without which the extra-dimensional pocket-paradise they had constructed for their spirits to dwell in would collapse.

It's not directly relevant because I wasn't going to use D&D rules, but a simplistic system with just 6-9 traits per character, with each character having a few special skills/powers. I can't remember much detail about the opponents & obstacles I was considering, but I do recall some stuff about the pregen characters:

Pharaoh: This mummy was a decent fighter, but his greatest ability was the power of Royal Command. Basically, by spending mana (magic points) he could make any pure-blooded descendant of his people do **anything he told them to** whether they were living, dead or undead.* There was no saving throw, he just needed to spend enough mana, and he would automatically sense whether someone was a "true person". I think I was planning on having a fight in a museum, where the Pharaoh discovers a few sarcophagi containing bodies he can use as cannon fodder.

*This includes every other player character except for the Queen.

The Queen: A concubine made good, the Queen was a minor aristocrat from a neighbouring country, so the Pharaoh's royal command power does not work on her. Unlike all the other undead PCs she was perfectly preserved and looked just like a living human, although she smelled strongly of spice. Her main power (apart from being able to freely mingle with mortals without arousing screams) was the ability to *charm* living males human(oid)s. She could also use cosmetic magic to briefly give the other undead the appearance they had in life.

The Priest: The Priest is the only living member of the PCs party, but he's not precisely mortal. His spirit is constantly reincarnated with all his memories, so long as the Paradise of the Tomb is intact that it, and his duty is to commune with the Ancestors and care for their resting places. Among his supernatural gifts is the power to heal/repair/revitalize both the living and the undead (requiring the use of medicines something like tanas leaves for undead, myrrh for mortals).

The Vizier: An arcane specialist as a bureaucrat, presumably a friendly (?) rival to the Priest's more spiritual powers. As well as some elemental and general utility spells (which I can't remember now) he possessed a case with ten *ushabti* - little clay effigies of men - who he could magically turn into minions (about as effective as peasant militias).

The General: A masterful warrior, possessing supernatural strength, toughness and agility but no actual spells. (I was also toying with the idea of having him be in love with The Queen and/or vica versa, although The Vizier or The Priest may fit that movie cliché better)

Oh, and all the PCs, both living and undead, were spiritually connected via the "Paradise of the Tomb", which basically meant they could freely communicate with each other even when the party split up.

JRM

02-05-2009 12:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9933223)

*Oh lordy. If you want to do *that*, I'll just curl up quietly in a corner and weep, WEEP for you. :)*

If it makes you feel any better for me, a few weeks ago I was inspired by this thread to stat-up several of the monsters I came up with in the 2nd edition format and then converted them into 3rd edition, giving you two obsolete editions for the price of one!

I'll probably post them with a link to this thread once we've finished with the MM.

ESkemp

02-05-2009 02:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I really love mummies because they by necessity ask two questions: why was this person deliberately mummified, and by whom? Was it a royal guard, an aristocrat, a priest? What was the culture like that deliberately mummifies people, whether they intend to make them horribly undead or not? They don't pop up at random, and that means plenty of room to customize them and make them distinctive.

Plus, they come with so many different styles of trappings that can be messed with. Customizing their trappings to a different culture is a lot of fun (even though their default Egyptian aesthetic is very attractive). Sarcophagi, crook-and-flail, tana leaves, scarabs, ankhs, mastabas, wall frescos, stone sphinxes or other beasts, ushabti, shrines to exotic gods, old papyrus scrolls... any one of those elements can be used as is, or adapted to fit the aesthetic of a different culture. They have this immense list of design elements to use, tinker with or decline, which is always good for a monster's overall longevity.

kelvingreen

02-05-2009 03:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9931697)

I'd quite like a campaign in which all the characters play sages, who spend the whole time running away from and dodging hideous beasts while attempting to study them - rather than fight or kill them.

Full xp for capturing the creature, half for killing it if there's enough left to study, none if it's completely annihilated. That'll sort out the powergamers.

kami2awa

02-05-2009 06:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kelvingreen (Post 9934224)

Full xp for capturing the creature, half for killing it if there's enough left to study, none if it's completely annihilated. That'll sort out the powergamers.

Plus rewards for eggs, feathers, skulls and other traces recovered. Maybe equal to the gp sale value for things like Giant Eagle eggs?

noisms

02-05-2009 09:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9933422)

Pharaoh: *This mummy was a decent fighter, but his greatest ability was the power of Royal Command. Basically, by spending mana (magic points) he could make any pure-blooded descendant of his people do **anything he told them to** whether they were living, dead or undead. * There was no saving throw, he just needed to spend enough mana, and he would automatically sense whether someone was a "true person". I think I was planning on having a fight in*

a museum, where the Pharaoh discovers a few sarcophagi containing bodies he can use as cannon fodder.

**This includes every other player character except for the Queen.*

That's a pretty cool idea actually. I've sometimes played around with ways to have PC classes who might be physically weak, but able to command others. You have to find a way to prevent idiots abusing it by commanding other characters though.

Quote:

Originally Posted by ESkemp (Post 9933860)

I really love mummies because they by necessity ask two questions: why was this person deliberately mummified, and by whom? Was it a royal guard, an aristocrat, a priest? What was the culture like that deliberately mummifies people, whether they intend to make them horribly undead or not? They don't pop up at random, and that means plenty of room to customize them and make them distinctive.

Plus, they come with so many different styles of trappings that can be messed with. Customizing their trappings to a different culture is a lot of fun (even though their default Egyptian aesthetic is very attractive). Sarcophagi, crook-and-flail, tana leaves, scarabs, ankhs, mastabas, wall frescos, stone sphinxes or other beasts, ushabti, shrines to exotic gods, old papyrus scrolls... any one of those elements can be used as is, or adapted to fit the aesthetic of a different culture. They have this immense list of design elements to use, tinker with or decline, which is always good for a monster's overall longevity.

The good thing about Egyptian mummies is the fact that they were entombed within large labyrinthine structures - which is a ready-made adventure site with numerous encounters and traps. As far as I know the non-Egyptian mummy making cultures tended not to do things the same way.

Fitzgrunion

02-05-2009 10:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9935624)

The good thing about Egyptian mummies is the fact that they were entombed within large labyrinthine structures - which is a ready-made adventure site with numerous encounters and traps. As far as I know the non-Egyptian mummy making cultures tended not to do things the same way.

I can't find any info on embalming or mummification practices but the mausoleum of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, is very impressive. 6000 Terracotta warriors, a cavernous chamber with miniature models of the continents, mercury rivers and oceans, a sky with constellations made of jewels, crossbow traps (in real life!). It's made of awesome!

Couple all this with the achievements of the man in real life -the unification of the Warring States, The great wall (well very much of it anyway), the 12 Jin Ren (Bronze colossi built from the weapons of the defeated states!) et. etc.. As well as all this Old Qin was *obsessed* with immortality and was romping around the countryside with his entourage of several tens of thousands of soldiers searching for the elixir of life when he

died. He wanted to live 10,000 years.

I think he found his elixir and he's down there -his mausoleum has not been opened yet. When his tomb is desecrated all the terracotta warriors (and the bronze colossi) will animate and take vengeance!:D

Someone mention ushabti earlier, those little fellas should animate, faience golems 3 inches high would strike terror into the hearts of the bravest tomb robbers.

Eskemp

02-05-2009 11:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9935624)

The good thing about Egyptian mummies is the fact that they were entombed within large labyrinthine structures - which is a ready-made adventure site with numerous encounters and traps. As far as I know the non-Egyptian mummy making cultures tended not to do things the same way.

True, but this is D&D. You can pretty much come up with an excuse for *every* culture to entomb *something* within a large labyrinthine structure — elves, dwarves, orcs, what have you.

Herrison

02-05-2009 11:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Eskemp (Post 9935982)

True, but this is D&D. You can pretty much come up with an excuse for every culture to entomb something within a large labyrinthine structure — elves, dwarves, orcs, what have you.

That reason for putting your every possession in a trap-filled maze is called the wandering monster table. I wouldn't even think of having a kid in D&D unless I were a name level spellcaster.

Fitzgrunion

02-05-2009 06:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Herrison (Post 9936036)

That reason for putting your every possession in a trap-filled maze is called the wandering monster table. I wouldn't

even think of having a kid in D&D unless I were a name level spellcaster.

To think us earthling folk have fear of the dark when there ain't much (other than other humans) in most of the world that threatens us much. Can you imagine the terror, anxiety and paranoia that you would feel living in any of these fantasy worlds? I think the fact that most of them are portrayed as dynamic, cosmopolitan pseudo-mediaeval worlds is misleading. Humans in the Realms, Krynn, Oerth etc. should be belligerent, paranoid, insular and hyper-aggressive, living in massively fortified compounds guarded by devious magics.

A world where monsters eat your children is scary.

noisms

02-05-2009 08:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Mummy, Greater

This bit should really have been folded into the previous entry, so feel free to keep batting around mummy ideas for a while longer. This sectoin is very long, and complicated. If anything it reminds me of the snore-enducing Dracolich entry, which rambles on for two pages of dense, packed text about the incredibly arcane creation procedure for the things. The Greater Mummy isn't quite that bad, but it's still far too detailed. Is it any coincidence that Ravenloft was involved in both?

The long and short of it is: Greater Mummies are much nastier than the regular kind, and have a sort of age template thing going on *a la* dragons. Their alignment even changes as they get older, going from Lawful Evil to Chaotic Evil: mummies are the opposite of humans it seems, growing less conservative as they age.

There's a lot of Ravenloft gumpf about Ankhtepot that I don't really know about, Ravenloft being probably my least favourite AD&D setting. I'd like to do a survey of the MM so far and find out how many setting specific monster descriptions there are and how many each setting has. My suspicion is that Ravenloft has the lion's share, with Forgotten Realms, Dark Sun and Spelljammer next in line. Speaking entirely extemporaneously of course.

For Fitzgrunion and anybody else who remembers my patented Monster Manual Art Assessment System: The Greater Mummy's artwork is definitely in the **Merely Bad** category in my opinion.

ESkemp

02-05-2009 09:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Herrison (Post 9936036)

That reason for putting your every posession in a trap-filled maze is called the wandering monster table. I wouldn't even think of having a kid in D&D unless I were a name level spellcaster.

And then you don't need kids: you attract XdX apprentices, who are already at least 1st level! Admittedly a 1st-level character has about the same mortality rate as an infant in our world, if not worse, but hey, it's something.

Back to the topic, I see mummies as one of the signature undead for any D&D game vanilla enough to have great huge ruins left there by vanished civilizations. Undead are capital dungeon-dwellers given their lack of need to eat, their ties to whomever built the dungeon, and their tendency to act as packets of lore if you can figure them out. Mummies exemplify this all the way. I think Gyax's Necropolis is a hell of a dungeon (although boy does it ever showcase his personal style), and it makes a strong argument for how powerful mummies could at *least* rival liches for arch-villains in a campaign. The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan: another classic source of inspiration, this time for taking the ancient mummies into more Mesoamerican motifs, and similarly the old Dungeon adventure "The Mud Sorcerer's Tomb" (which was pretty much a great fusion of both Tomb of Horrors and Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan).

And like I said, they work great with the fantasy race of your choice. Mummified orc warlords sleeping uneasily in tumbled cairns, ready to break loose and trample civilization under their scythed chariot wheels! Mummified dwarves, the terror of any dwarf who's been taught to fear and respect the terrible wisdom of the ancestors! Mummified troglodytes, the ancient forebears of the D&D killer sleestak! Mummified gibberlings — um, no explanation pops immediately to mind, but I'm certain it would be very interesting!

DMH

02-06-2009 12:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9937414)

Their alignment even changes as they get older, going from Lawful Evil to Chaotic Evil: mummies are the opposite of humans it seems, growing less conservative as they age.

This crap makes my eye twitch (and did so back with Monsters of Myth and Legend from Mayfair). Why is CE more evil than LE? Wouldn't social creatures be more of a threat to Good society? Why isn't NE the most evil of them all?

And no monster can be too detailed.

Kakita Kojiro

02-06-2009 01:21 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9938321)

This crap makes my eye twitch (and did so back with Monsters of Myth and Legend from Mayfair). Why is CE more evil than LE? Wouldn't social creatures be more of a threat to Good society? Why isn't NE the most evil of them all?

He said less *conservative*, not less *evil*. Rush Limbaugh and Karl Rove aside, conservative is not the same thing as evil.

rex monday

02-06-2009 02:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9938515)

He said less conservative, not less evil. Rush Limbaugh and Karl Rove aside, conservative is not the same thing as evil.

Yeah, it seems to represent a slow decline into insanity more than any increase in evil. Which is kinda sad if you can empathize with the wizened husk of a god-emperor that can rot you by touching you.

YojimboC

02-06-2009 04:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Point of order -- I don't think dracoliches came from Ravenloft. The only setting I'm aware even bothers with the things is Forgotten Realms.

DMH

02-06-2009 05:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9938515)

He said less conservative, not less evil. Rush Limbaugh and Karl Rove aside, conservative is not the same thing as evil.

But I am not commenting on noisms post but rather what is in the MM. That is why I included the questions about why CE is more evil than LE.

Mr. Teapot

02-06-2009 05:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9939327)

Point of order -- I don't think dracoliches came from Ravenloft. The only setting I'm aware even bothers with the things is Forgotten Realms.

Dragotha, the original dracolich, is from Greyhawk, I believe. (Well, wherever the White Plume Mountain module is set, which is according to Dragon #134 in Greyhawk). Definitely not a Ravenloft monster.

Mr. Teapot

02-06-2009 06:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9932455)

You could even make the threat something other than mummies. Particularly in the frozen specimens and the bog mummies, even the stomach contents are preserved. Their might be seeds of some early plant, that sprout. Shoots burst from the corpse, and start spreading. A new invasive species, that threatens the modern world.

It's a long way before we get to Yellow Musk Creepers, but they'd fit that job really well. An ancient civilization was plagued by parasitic, mind controlling plants that make you a zombie. They couldn't deal with all the zombies, so they rounded them up and somehow herded them northward into the frozen wastes. The zombies didn't die, but they were all frozen up there. Now the PCs accidentally uncover one, which unleashed the parasitic Yellow Musk plants on the unsuspecting modern campaign setting. Once they're done dealing with just one Musk plant, let them find the ten thousand other Yellow Musk zombies up there.

Shit, that was supposed to be about mummies, wasn't it? Well, perhaps the yellow musk plant was the brainchild of an ancient druid or wizard type, who was preserved as a mummy (who preserved him and why?). Maybe he was frozen up north with them, maybe preserved elsewhere. But now he's active again, and knows about the army of Yellow Musk zombies in the glacier. The PCs have to race to the north pole to stop a zombie/parasitic plant apocalypse.

Mr. Teapot

02-06-2009 06:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9932926)

Speaking of Andean mummies, the Incas mummified their dead rulers... and kept them around. They didn't bury them in tombs. Dead rulers maintained their own courts, and had followers who continued to use them as figureheads to bolster their political aims. The Spanish took advantage of this, and its one of the reasons why the Incas lost, despite a numerical and territorial advantage.

Anyway, in D&D, those mummified rulers aren't just bodies... they're ambulatory, intelligent, and they've got their own ideas on how the country should be run.

Maybe I've been playing D&D enough to have looped around, but "country ruled by immortal undead" starts to seem old hat. The weird craziness of just having perfectly normal mundane non-ambulatory mummies be the "rulers" of the country is something I like, though. It also sets the party up for one thing and gives them a surprise:

GM: "You know this country is ruled by a council of ancient emperors, each mummified upon their death. Even after their deaths, they continue to hold court and make their wishes known. Your army has finally marched into the capital city, and you PCs are about to storm the palace.

Player 1: "Great, a mummy. Well, Father Ted will prepare his anti-undead spells."

Player 2: "I requisition all the alchemist's fire, greek fire and lantern oil I can get from the army."

etc. Then inside, they find a mummified corpse on a throne, waste some attacks, and are surprised when it doesn't fight back but the vizier does, who is immune to all their fire and anti-undead tactics (cause he's a living wizard with Fire Shield up).

YojimboC

02-06-2009 06:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9940056)

Maybe I've been playing D&D enough to have looped around, but "country ruled by immortal undead" starts to seem old hat. The weird craziness of just having perfectly normal mundane non-ambulatory mummies be the "rulers" of the country is something I like, though. It also sets the party up for one thing and gives them a surprise:

Fair enough. I thought it just be a neat flavorful thing -- our characters don't generally kill the rulers of foreign nations (except sometimes). I just think a non-Ravenloft undead-ocracy would be cool.

Fitzgrunion

02-06-2009 06:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

There's an extent to which historical societies wherein ancestor worship was of considerable significance were considerably influenced, if not ruled, by the memories of their ancestors. Consider Egypt and China, the two most enduring civilisations the world has ever known. In Egypt especially the monumental shadow of the Old kingdom pharaohs was an ever-present element in life. The fact that Egyptian culture remained so memetically static that a degree of expertise is required to differentiate art and artefacts spread over a 3000 year period is testament to the enduring power of the pharaohs, even beyond the grave.

Now imagine a culture where the old kings are still alive, whether ambulatory or not. The knowledge that the ancestors are there, waiting under the ground is considerable incentive to obey and remain steadfast to their wishes. The designation of a lawful evil alignment to Mummies would reflect the fact that they would act as a powerful force for a kind of malignant conservatism. The mummies don't need to rule, their influence is still felt if there is nominally a mortal ruler. Although I do like the idea of the ruling government consisting of a bureaucracy that carries out the whims of the immortal emperor beneath the ground.

I disagree that the mummy image is **Merely Bad** I find it to be Somewhere in the Vicinity of Ok or whatever the designation designating a kind of acceptable mediocrity was. Baxa must have been cheap because they used him a great deal back in the day, this image is kitschy and dorksomeness but has some dynamism, which is sorely lacking in the other mummy.

noisms

02-06-2009 07:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9938321)

This crap makes my eye twitch (and did so back with Monsters of Myth and Legend from Mayfair). Why is CE more evil than LE? Wouldn't social creatures be more of a threat to Good society? Why isn't NE the most evil of them all?

And no monster can be too detailed.

Yeah, that line about becoming "darker and more evil" is a bit rich. I guess that's where the 4e designers took their inspiration! But let's not go down that path.

I don't think there's anything wrong with detailed monsters but I'd prefer it if they'd leave most of the work to individual DMs. For me the Greater Mummy, like the Dracolich, steps over a certain line between stimulating and over-detailed.

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9939327)

Point of order -- I don't think dracoliches came from Ravenloft. The only setting I'm aware even bothers with the things is Forgotten Realms.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9939981)

Dragotha, the original dracolich, is from Greyhawk, I believe. (Well, wherever the White Plume Mountain module is set, which is according to Dragon #134 in Greyhawk). Definitely not a Ravenloft monster.

Hmm, I stand corrected. I always thought Dracoliches were originally from Ravenloft for some reason.

Lukas Sjöström

02-06-2009 07:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9940056)

The weird craziness of just having perfectly normal mundane non-ambulatory mummies be the "rulers" of the country is something I like, though.

More D&D use for the Great Leader Kim Il-Sung, Eternal President of North Korea! :D

noisms

02-06-2009 08:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9940056)

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In Bas-Lag, the world of China Mieville's novels, there's a nation in which the undead and living exist side by side, called Kromlech I think. There's even a Kromlech language which allows replacement of words with hand signals, because as the undead 'age' they lose their lips, vocal cords and tongue and therefore the ability to make sounds.

Sleeper

02-06-2009 09:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9940603)

In Bas-Lag, the world of China Mieville's novels, there's a nation in which the undead and living exist side by side, called Kromlech I think. There's even a Kromlech language which allows replacement of words with hand signals, because as the undead 'age' they lose their lips, vocal cords and tongue and therefore the ability to make sounds.

Kromlech? As in *cromlech*? Does that mean the language of dragons is "Aubelisque" and the language of golems is "Menheer"?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9939981)

Dragotha, the original dracolich, is from Greyhawk, I believe. (Well, wherever the White Plume Mountain module is set, which is according to Dragon #134 in Greyhawk). Definitely not a Ravenloft monster.

Technically, I believe Dragotha was originally referred to as an "undead dragon", not a dracolich. The first true use of dracolich might have been Greenwood's article on the Cult of the Dragon in an old issue of *Dragon*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9940056)

Maybe I've been playing D&D enough to have looped around, but "country ruled by immortal undead" starts to seem old hat. The weird craziness of just having perfectly normal mundane non-ambulatory mummies be the "rulers" of the country is something I like, though.

That's the kind of thing I can appreciate, as well. I sometimes hate the "jump immediately to a magical explanation" mindset that seems to pervade a lot of fantasy settings. You could also throw in a scheming bureaucracy of priests, many who aren't clerics, and have ritual divinations and other means of contacting the dead. The trick is, the traditional rituals for contacting the dead are roughly as meritorious as astrology, giving the priests free reign when it comes to interpretation. Actual divine spellcasters who can cast *speak with*

dead or commune are frowned on for disturbing the dead with too blunt a tool. And, of course, for undercutting the authority of the establishment.

noisms

02-06-2009 09:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9940856)

Kromlech? As in cromlech? Does that mean the language of dragons is "Aubelisque" and the language of golems is "Menheer"?

No, but they should be. ;)

Naxuul

02-06-2009 10:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9937414)

My suspicion is that Ravenloft has the lion's share, with Forgotten Realms, Dark Sun and Spelljammer next in line. Speaking entirely extemporaneously of course.

It depends. If you mean 'includes material about the setting from which they come' then Ravenloft and Spelljammer are the obvious winners, as pretty much all their monster entries make obnoxious amounts of references to setting material. If you mean monsters from specific setting monster books then Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms are the big winners as alot of the creatures in the book who are generic fantasy like creatures first appeared in their monstrous appendixes.

-Naxuul

Kakita Kojiro

02-06-2009 10:12 AM

You know, the really bad thing about using Egyptian mummies as the archetypical "mummy" is... they're actually wrapped up and sarcophagized so tightly that they'd *really* be no threat.

Legs all bound together, arms crossed over the chest and wrapped just as tight. What's he going to do, *hop* after you? It's like being threatened by the Black Knight... except, can't bite your ankles, 'cause his mouth is all wrapped up, too.

Bog mummies, though... they'll drag victims back to their peat bog, and make *them* mummies, too. It's like leveling-up a zombie plague.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9939977)

But I am not commenting on noisms post but rather what is in the MM. That is why I included the questions about why CE is more evil than LE.

Ah. Well, then, carry on.

noisms

02-06-2009 10:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 9941023)

It depends. If you mean 'includes material about the setting from which they come' then Ravenloft and Spelljammer are the obvious winners, as pretty much all their monster entries make obnoxious amounts of references to setting material. If you mean monsters from specific setting monster books then Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms are the big winners as alot of the creatures in the book who are generic fantasy like creatures first appeared in their monstrous appendixes.

-Naxuul

Yeah, 'includes material about the setting from which they come' is closer to what I meant. Ravenloft and Spelljammer do take the cake when it comes to making reference after reference to stuff that makes you go 'huh?' if you aren't *au fait*, although thinking about it, Dark Sun can be just as bad.

There needs to be an empirical study, I feel.

Naxuul

02-06-2009 11:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9941122)

Yeah, 'includes material about the setting from which they come' is closer to what I meant. Ravenloft and Spelljammer do take the cake when it comes to making reference after reference to stuff that makes you go 'huh?' if you aren't au fait, although thinking about it, Dark Sun can be just as bad.

There needs to be an empirical study, I feel.

Oh yeah, Dark Sun is pretty bad for that. But I think the total of Dark Sun creatures in the Monstrous Manual are the Kirre, Gith and a couple of carnivorous plants. Unfortunately alot of the cooler Dark Sun creatures, like the elemental drakes, silt horrors, desert water monsters or unique Dark Sun domesticated animals never made their way into it.

-Naxuul

noisms

02-06-2009 12:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 9941201)

Oh yeah, Dark Sun is pretty bad for that. But I think the total of Dark Sun creatures in the Monstrous Manual are the Kirre, Gith and a couple of carnivorous plants. Unfortunately alot of the cooler Dark Sun creatures, like the elementa drakes, silt horrors, desert water monsters or unique Dark Sun domesticated animals never made their way into it.

-Naxuul

Although there aren't that many Spelljammer creatures in there either. Arcane, Giff, Pirate Gith... not sure I can think of a lot else off hand.

I wonder if you can translate MM appearances into popularity? Forgotten Realms and Dragonlance presumably have the most monsters in the MM, then Ravenloft... There must be a correlation between that and sales.

Wakboth

02-06-2009 05:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9941546)

Although there aren't that many Spelljammer creatures in there either. Arcane, Giff, Pirate Gith... not sure I can think of a lot else off hand.

How could you forget the neogi?! ;)

Argos is from Spelljammer, I think. Maybe some of the beholder variants as well?

JasonK

02-06-2009 05:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9940856)

That's the kind of thing I can appreciate, as well. I sometimes hate the "jump immediately to a magical explanation"

mindset that seems to pervade a lot of fantasy settings. You could also throw in a scheming bureaucracy of priests, many who aren't clerics, and have ritual divinations and other means of contacting the dead. The trick is, the traditional rituals for contacting the dead are roughly as meritorious as astrology, giving the priests free reign when it comes to interpretation. Actual divine spellcasters who can cast speak with dead or commune are frowned on for disturbing the dead with too blunt a tool. And, of course, for undercutting the authority of the establishment.

Indeed. I want to find a way to put this into my game world now - I'm just not sure where it'd fit.

Hhm...

- jasön

JRM

02-06-2009 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9935624)

Quote:

Originally Posted by jrm (Post 9933422)

Pharaoh: *This mummy was a decent fighter, but his greatest ability was the power of Royal Command. Basically by spending mana (magic points) he could make any pure-blooded descendant of his people do **anything he told them to** whether they were living, dead or undead. * There was no saving throw, he just needed to spend enough mana, and he would automatically sense whether someone was a "true person". I think I was planning on having a fight in a museum, where the Pharaoh discovers a few sarcophagi containing bodies he can use as cannon fodder.*

**This includes every other player character except for the Queen.*

That's a pretty cool idea actually. I've sometimes played around with ways to have PC classes who might be physically weak, but able to command others. You have to find a way to prevent idiots abusing it by commanding other characters though.

The potential of idiots abusing it was deliberate. History has proved that hereditary monarchs can include some right plonkers - imagine one of them with the power of a God-Emperor. Since it was going to be a one-shot, it didn't matter so much if a reckless Pharaoh started wrecking the campaign, and it gave the other PCs a chance to conspire against him.

As for balance, my plan was the "Command" power would have a variable cost depending on target, and the Pharaoh would only have enough mana to command one or two of the other PCs, and I was thinking of having his Power require him to hold a magical object of some kind - probably a Flail or Crook of Royalty. Also, I'd have probably had them vote as to who would play the Pharaoh.

In a one-shot I ran years ago called **Brain Suckers From Dimension X**, where the players played horrible mind-controlling parasites invading a US small town in the 50s, the "Command Brain Sucker" had a similar power to the Pharaoh. In one game it/he got attacked by an enemy alien disguised as a policeman, so it/he panicked and COMMANDED the "Combat Brain Sucker" to kill everyone in the building just before it/he was knocked out by the alien's stun-disc. Unfortunately, said "everyone" included the entire party. The Combat Brain Sucker ended

up killing the enemy aliens and every human in the building then seriously wounded two of the other PCs, but was electrified unconscious before it/she was able to finish the job.

Belchion

02-06-2009 10:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9937414)

Their alignment even changes as they get older, going from Lawful Evil to Chaotic Evil: mummies are the opposite of humans it seems, growing less conservative as they age.

I doubt the mummys get less conservative, rather that they keep their point of view and thus get "out of touch" with the rest of the world. If you start as conservative and do not move, you end up a reactionary and finally become progressive again, because that what you want to "return to" will be "something new" for the rest of the world.

Imagine some mummy who was formerly a conservative Sumerian priest, got entombed when the progressives took over, was freed again by the reactionary movement several years later, and till today schemes to restore the "old ways" - which have nothing in common with the modern "way of life".

JRM

02-07-2009 12:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9942974)

I doubt the mummys get less conservative, rather that they keep their point of view and thus get "out of touch" with the rest of the world. If you start as conservative and do not move, you end up a reactionary and finally become progressive again, because that what you want to "return to" will be "something new" for the rest of the world.

Imagine some mummy who was formerly a conservative Sumerian priest, got entombed when the progressives took over, was freed again by the reactionary movement several years later, and till today schemes to restore the "old ways" - which have nothing in common with the modern "way of life".

Don't see how I can agree with you there. Surely a mummy is still Lawful if it believes in Going by the Rules, even when the system of rules it adheres to is one that no-one living practices.

kelvingreen

02-07-2009 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9940603)

In Bas-Lag, the world of China Mieville's novels, there's a nation in which the undead and living exist side by side, called Kromlech I think. There's even a Kromlech language which allows replacement of words with hand signals, because as the undead 'age' they lose their lips, vocal cords and tongue and therefore the ability to make sounds.

It's High Cromlech, and when I came across it in *The Scar*, I immediately knew Mieville was a gamer, as the section read much more like campaign setting than story background. I particularly liked the bit about the vampires of High Cromlech, who are treated like pathetic drug addicts by the rest of the undead, because of their dependency on the blood of the living.

Mr. Teapot

02-07-2009 06:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9940856)

That's the kind of thing I can appreciate, as well. I sometimes hate the "jump immediately to a magical explanation" mindset that seems to pervade a lot of fantasy settings. You could also throw in a scheming bureaucracy of priests, many who aren't clerics, and have ritual divinations and other means of contacting the dead. The trick is, the traditional rituals for contacting the dead are roughly as meritorious as astrology, giving the priests free reign when it comes to interpretation. Actual divine spellcasters who can cast speak with dead or commune are frowned on for disturbing the dead with too blunt a tool. And, of course, for undercutting the authority of the establishment.

Yeah, that's definitely the sort of thing I was imagining.

s/LaSH

02-07-2009 09:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9941045)

You know, the really bad thing about using Egyptian mummies as the archetypical "mummy" is... they're actually wrapped up and sarcophagized so tightly that they'd really be no threat.

Legs all bound together, arms crossed over the chest and wrapped just as tight. What's he going to do, hop after you? It's like being threatened by the Black Knight... except, can't bite your ankles, 'cause his mouth is all wrapped up, too.

I dunno, isn't this part of the Hopping Vampire schtick? You could have some serious fun with something so apparently silly, especially if it's very difficult to injure but is otherwise limited to headbutting people. Imagine PCs blinking confusedly at the hopping mummy, looting the tomb blind and walking briskly out of the pyramid while this thing hops slowly after them. And then, six weeks later, there's a thump-thump-thump in the street outside the tavern where they're living it large...

noisms

02-07-2009 09:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Who would have thought Mummies would generate so much comment? Something tells me the next lot won't be quite so stimulating, but we'll see.

Myconid

First things first: cool picture. I like the delicate, almost waif-like quality to the piece. There's something spooky and alien about it too, which suits Myconids very well.

Second things second: the entry is *loong*. I'd forgotten just how long it is. Myconids have a heck of a lot of different powers to be detailed and a big chunk of text describing their ecology and ruler, the Myconid king.

It basically boils down to this: Myconids hate and fear other humanoids, who they see as violent and destructive. So they keep themselves to themselves, creating collective hallucinations and lazing around in mossy garden areas. They are a bit like utopian socialists, with communal, tightly knit 'circles' of equals who do everything together, but the existence of a king rather belies that. The king is always the strongest Myconid, and that doesn't sound very utopian socialist.

In combat they release spores which have a variety of effects, such as causing hallucinations, raising the alarm, or (my favourite) animating a corpse into a kind of fungus zombie. Above this the king can create potions which can be used to infect enemies with deadly fungal diseases, spur fungal growth, and a variety of other things. Nice abilities, actually: if I have any complaint it's that I'd like to link different kinds of spore to different varieties of fungus, so that there could be death-inducing Deadly Nightcap breeds or whatever.

One thing that puzzled me about Myconids is that they live deep underground - in the Underdark in fact. I know that there is fungi underground, but toadstools seem like more of a woodland thing to me. I'd rather situate Myconids deep in a Fangorn-type forest, far from civilisation, inaccessible to all but the absolute toughest of explorers. Another possibility for the Royal Teratological Society, maybe.

kelvingreen

02-07-2009 09:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9945791)

First things first: cool picture. I like the delicate, almost waif-like quality to the piece.

Well, it's a DiTerlizzi, isn't it, and "waifish" is pretty much his stock style in this period. A good picture though, I agree. And I agree with moving the Myconids to a forest setting too; there are lots of interesting creatures underground, but *D&D* forests could do with some sprucing up.

demiurge1138

02-07-2009 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I used myconids in a low-level game I ran as an intro to D&D to introduce the alien nature of the Underdark. Great

fungal forests, with the myconids tending their crops in eerie silence. They did a favor for the myconid king by killing some ooze that was immune to their spores and were rewarded with potions to buff their poor little first level selves. Made for a good side-trip, but I've always wanted to do more with them.

Has anyone here seen *Matango: Fungus of Terror*? It was originally released in the States as *Attack of the Mushroom People*. It's a Japanese horror film somewhere between *The Thing* and *Gilligan's Island*. A pleasure cruise shipwrecks on a desert island where there's nothing to eat except for mushrooms--that slowly turn you into an ambulatory mushroom. Play up the growth and corruption aspect of the myconids, I think, and you could make them into a similar antagonist.

EmperorSeth

02-07-2009 01:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9946426)

I used myconids in a low-level game I ran as an intro to D&D to introduce the alien nature of the Underdark. Great fungal forests, with the myconids tending their crops in eerie silence. They did a favor for the myconid king by killing some ooze that was immune to their spores and were rewarded with potions to buff their poor little first level selves. Made for a good side-trip, but I've always wanted to do more with them.

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I never saw it, but the village name was used in the localization of Secret of Mana back in the nineties. It also had a vampire boss named Buffy, which was pretty obscure given that this came after the movie but well before the much more popular TV series.

As for myconids, I featured a village of them in an early dungeon crawl. I mostly ignored that "hate humanoids" part, or maybe 3rd ed left that out, to make them basically hippy stereotypes. I think I gave their forest a dumb pun name as well...let me check...Fungal Jungle. Not a pun, but a rhyme. Close enough.

Vultur10

02-07-2009 03:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The Matango movie was apparently based (although quite loosely) on a story called "The Voice in the Night" by William Hope Hodgson.

JRM

02-07-2009 05:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9945791)

Myconid

It basically boils down to this: Myconids hate and fear other humanoids, who they see as violent and destructive. So they keep themselves to themselves, creating collective hallucinations and lazing around in mossy garden areas. They are a bit like utopian socialists, with communal, tightly knit 'circles' of equals who do everything together, but the existence of a king rather belies that. The king is always the strongest Myconid, and that doesn't sound very utopian socialist.

I suspect that seeing the King as the ruler of the Myconids is a human misinterpretation. The Myconid King is a lonely outcast, denied access to melding with the circles, where the true power lies. A circle of twenty myconids is almost a single being, so closely do they share their thoughts while melded, and far more powerful communally than the King is individually. The King's main duty is dealing with outsiders, which is why he's the most powerful combatant and has the ability to create Fungal Zombies to attack them. 'He' is also cursed with the duty of dealing with the "violent, insane" sapient species like humans that the myconids may have to actually, urgh, **talk to**.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9945791)

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Good idea, Forest Myconids would definitely work. Maybe they have a symbiotic relationship with some of the harmless fey races - those mushrooms you see forest gnomes sitting on may actually be sapient.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9945791)

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I've heard of Matango, but never seen it. My instinct is to go the other way - Myconids taste *delicious*, similar to the finest white truffles, and those with hallucinogenic spores (4+ HD) can also give a wonderful "high" if you eat their gills. That's why they're so shy and fear humanoid races so much, they just don't want to be eaten.

migo

02-07-2009 05:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9946426)

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.

This is kind of a strange idea. Myconids tending mushrooms, since they're mushroom people would be rather like humans harvesting humans without brains. I suppose this would be like growing people for organ replacement and nothing else. Kinda creepy if you think about it.

noisms

02-07-2009 05:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by migo (Post 9946951)

This is kind of a strange idea. Myconids tending mushrooms, since they're mushroom people would be rather like humans harvesting humans without brains. I suppose this would be like growing people for organ replacement and nothing else. Kinda creepy if you think about it.

Technically fungi are an entire Kingdom, so one species eating another is no different from a human eating a cow, fish or grasshopper. Which I suppose is creepy if you're a vegetarian.

Let's turn it around and imagine that, to fungus people, humans are as delicious as we find a portobello or truffle. We're like their delicacies, only to be consumed on rare occasions or at banquets.

JasonK

02-07-2009 06:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9946935)

Good idea, Forest Myconids would definitely work. Maybe they have a symbiotic relationship with some of the harmless fey races - those mushrooms you see forest gnomes sitting on may actually be sapient.

My instinct in D&D is always to take the huge array of creature types/origins and reduce their number to something more... mythically manageable, I suppose you'd say. Consequently, in most game worlds I've made, plant creatures *are* fey-types. Myconids are no exception to this rule.

- jasön

Sleeper

02-07-2009 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I like the idea of forest-fungi and corruption. Very *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, though I wouldn't hammer home the ecological themes quite as hard as Miyazaki.

kami2awa

02-07-2009 10:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by s/LaSH (Post 9945783)

I dunno, isn't this part of the Hopping Vampire schtick? You could have some serious fun with something so apparently silly, especially if it's very difficult to injure but is otherwise limited to headbutting people. Imagine PCs blinking confusedly at the hopping mummy, looting the tomb blind and walking briskly out of the pyramid while this thing hops slowly after them. And then, six weeks later, there's a thump-thump-thump in the street outside the tavern where they're living it large...

That's pretty scary if played the right way. The mummy might have unnatural strength and speed, and huge, distended Imhotep jaws making it very nasty even while wrapped up.

Kakita Kojiro

02-08-2009 03:02 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9946958)

Technically fungi are an entire Kingdom, so one species eating another is no different from a human eating a cow, fish or grasshopper. Which I suppose is creepy if you're a vegetarian.

Fungi often thrive symbiotically or parasitically, even on other fungi, so I'm not certain if Myconids would regard food in the same manner as humans might. Humans have an aversion to eating human flesh as unnatural -- myconids might think you're weird for *not* recycling granny.

And although the fungus men grow other fungi -- do we know they do so to *eat* them, or to make fungal potions? Myconids could probably subsist on any sort of rotting vegetation or flesh; they've probably got quite a lot of extra time on their hands, not having to hunt or farm, for raising 'shrooms and chillin' out.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9947245)

I like the idea of forest-fungi and corruption. Very Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, though I wouldn't hammer home the ecological themes quite as hard as Miyazaki.

I never finished it, but I have an unfinished project for building a Nausicaa-like area into the world of Mystara, set on Southern Skothar, east of Minea.

It was around 3060 BC that the government of Kaloonlyland began the 'Land Reclamation Project'. This was an effort to develop ways to render the land habitable, so that it could be used for farming once the mines finally all gave out. In the cooler northern (now western) regions, some progress was made in cleansing the waters and developing irrigated farms. In the very heart of the Yuila al Kaloonly, a group of magitechnicians began experimenting with life forms which would consume polluted soil and water and convert it to fertile soil.

One year before the Great Rain of Fire, it was announced that a ten year project by these technicians was proving to be a great success. While the process of cleansing would be slow, a large swathe of land could be purified by the time the mines ran out, if currently projected figures proved accurate. Weeks before the Great Rain of Fire, the go-ahead was given to begin the project on a large scale in the center of the region. Exactly one week before the Great Rain of Fire, the seeding of a 400 square mile region was complete, and the supplies had been put in place to extend the project.

And then civilization died screaming. The Great Rain of Fire was the result of a chain reaction involving the igniting of most of the deposits of utherite on the planet. The basic problem was that the Blackmoorian civilization had developed powerful 'reactors', which converted utherite into magical energy, which could then be used to power various devices which blended alien technology and mortal magic. Utherite itself is normally quite stable.

However, under certain conditions, it could create a chain reaction like that which modern world scientists feared would result in our world if atomic bombs were detonated. Reactors had blown before without causing disasters, but the one in Blackmoor City itself was the largest of its kind, and Blackmoor City had six more huge ones. The result was a chain reaction strong enough to ignite the entire layer of utherite that lay under most of the Kingdom of Blackmoor.

And when that went up, it sent a wave of magical energy across the entire planet, energy trapped by the skyshield and redirected down onto the planet, the Great Rain of Fire. Worst of all for the people of the Yuila al Kaloonly, the Great Rain of Fire ignited all of the utherite remaining in their lands. The major cities, built over undiscovered deep strata of utherite, were blown sky high within two days of the beginning of the Great Rain of Fire. The minor cities perished in explosions, steppe fires, and fire from heaven. The survivors found that many of their devices no longer worked because every reactor had become a crater, although stored energy survived.

Further disasters scourged the land in the years to come. The shifting of the axis caused disastrous storms and freak weather for decades in the wake of the Great Rain of Fire, and many creatures were strangely mutated by the Great Rain and by the massive detonation of utherite. Even more of the land became polluted waste; it was at this time that the Keres changed their name to 'Waros', which means survivors in their tongue, and dubbed the land that had once been theirs as 'Drakhaba al Kaloonly', the Sea of Corruption.

The Waros were few in number, and the after effects of the Great Rain made them even fewer. But slowly they began to flourish. Most of them had abandoned their nomadic ways under pressure from the Blackmoorians, and their coastal region, which was now on the southern side of Drakhaba al Kaloonly, became a land of

stubborn farmers and tough warriors. The boldest of them returned to the way of the horse and moved into the interior, learning how to survive among the wastes.

It was they who brought back the news of the 'Virik al Ragoon', the 'Forest of Fungus', which was gradually growing in the heart of the Drakhaba al Kaloon. It was a strangely pale land of huge intertwined 'fungal' growths and insects which dwelt within it, led and guarded by the powerful 'Ragoon al Asagir', the 'Wise Ones of the Forest', huge armored insects the size of a small village. The forest was filled with a strange miasma which would slay the unwary and careless. The explorers came to call themselves 'Sebgir', or 'Daring Ones', and learned how to survive briefly in the forest, and fairly well among the devastated lands, which in some places were beginning to heal, although many remained dangerous.

Over the centuries, the Waros farmers, and the Sebgir nomads split apart, and began to war with each other. The Waros built a series of short-lived empires which repeatedly crumbled into city states, sometimes falling prey to conquest by Sebgir tribes. They traded by sea with the Tanagoro, Jennites, and the tribes of what is now Minea.

This might have continued forever, except for two things. First, the Sebgir became concerned when it finally sank in that the Virik al Ragoon was growing ever so slowly, consuming more and more of their land. Secondly, the forces of the Sakhalian empire pushed around the northern and southern ends of the Virik al Ragoon and began to conquer their lands.

The Sakhalians were descended from the humans and dwarves who had lived on the eastern (now northern) coast of the Drakhaba al Kaloon. The dwarves had largely died out, but the survivors were a tough and sturdy stock much like the ones altered by Kagyar on Brun. The humans had become tougher as well, nearly immune to disease. Most were descended from the bands of slaves who had survived the disaster, with a small intermixture of Blackmoorians. Led by the most recently enslaved, who still possessed the low tech survival skills of their ancestors, they had slowly and painfully dragged their way up from the stone age to the Iron Age by 1000 BC, then began to explore the ruins beneath their cities and scattered across the plains south of them.

By 500 BC, the Sakhalin Empire had arisen. It combined Iron Age technology, skillful magic, and salvaged Blackmoorian magitech in its arsenal. They found undetonated Utherite deposits in the mountains, which had been shielded from the global chain reaction by the bulk of normal rock above them. These deposits were small, but enough for them to turn their capital, Sakhalin, into a wonder of the world. Their forces now swept across the rest of the Drakhaba al Kaloon, conquering it.

They integrated the lore of the Sebgir into their arsenal, and swept down, conquering the Waros farmers in a series of fierce wars. Their armies pushed into Tanagoro and the Jennite lands as well, and by 350 BC, they had become a mighty empire. They began to exploit the creatures of the Virik al Ragoon for their own benefit, especially the Ragoon al Asagir, whose shells could be used to make nearly indestructible armor and weapons.

It was in 333 BC, in the reign of Tekhmet the Magnificent (called by later times, Tekhmet the Fool), that the time of Sakhalin greatness came to an end. Tekhmet saw the Virik al Ragoon as an abomination, and its continued growth as a direct insult to himself. Was he not the ruler of the greatest empire of the world? (Rumors of Alphatia that drifted in from the Jennites were ignored.) Had he not forced the God King of Eryos in Tangor to submit? Had not the Jennites been forced to kneel? And yet this forest deadly to man sat in the heart of his empire, nibbling away at it.

And so, egged on by the priests of Ixion, he decided to burn it. On the first of Fyrmont, his armies attacked the forest. And the forest struck back in the first known example of what is now known as 'the Daikasho', the 'fatal onslaught'. Thousands of Ragoon al Asagir swept out of the forest, attacking and destroying much of his forces. They swept east and north across the thinly populated regions between the Virik al Ragoon and the heartland of the empire beyond the mountains. None reached the mountains; his armies managed to slay many, and others seemed to die once they went too far from the forest. Still, they buried many of the old cities which had been resettled by the Sakhalin, and spores fell from their bodies. From those spores grew fresh forest, and the Virik al Ragoon swelled to several times its former size.

The Sakhalin empire collapsed. The Sebgir revolted in alliance with the Waros and drove them from the west and south. The dwarves revolted, cutting off the Utherite supplies, and the Blackmoorian devices of Sakhalin

failed. Sakhalin broke apart into squabbling states which periodically reunited into brief-lived empires.

The eastern and northern fringes of the Drakhaba al Kaloön became the home of many squabbling city states, much like the southern region of the Waros, but slightly higher in technological level. Most of these states could boast a handful of functional Blackmoorian devices, pried from ruins and carefully maintained. The dwarves gained a powerful economic position from their control of access to Utherite.

The third and most recent Daikasho came around 500 AC, when a powerful Waros leader, Nimrod the Great, united the Waros lands and conquered the Sebgir. He then began to exploit the Rigoon al Asagir to arm his troops. They had begun to conquer the remnants of the Sakhalin states when the Rigoon al Asagir had enough and unleashed the Daikasho across much of the Sebgir lands. This happened during a major troop movement, and the Waros emperor was slain. The Sebgir came close to extinction, and the Virik al Ragoon now reached the border of the Waros lands.

Around 700 AC, Tangoro sea raiders began to harass the coast of Waros, which was sunk into another period of squabbling states. One foolish ruler invited a group of Tanagoro raiders, the Taymor, to settle along the coast of his lands, hoping to get them to stop the others. Instead, they conquered his kingdom, and with the help of more raiders, conquered the others as well. Some of the nobles of the kingdoms escaped to the northwest, and joined with the remains of the Sebgir, who had settled down into a series of small farming communities in the small islands of healthy land which dot the western and northern fringes of the Drakhaba al Kaloön. These became known as the 'Valley Kingdoms', and were forced to swear fealty to the 'Taylin Heptarchy', a collection of seven kingdoms dominated by a Tangoro-derived ruling class and led by the High King of the Taylin.

Around the same time, a mysterious figure who called himself 'the Holy Emperor' appeared in the lands of the Sakhaba (the human survivors of the fallen Sakhalin Empire). He possessed a great knowledge of Blackmoor's secrets, and he used those to gradually forge 'the Holy Empire of Sakhaba', which he ruled, apparently without aging, from New Sakhalin, built on the ruins of the old.

This took him centuries, during which the Heptarchy of Taylin consolidated its power and began to become a more consolidated state. For a hundred years, the Heptarchy and the Holy Empire have sparred around the fringes of the Virik al Ragoon with each other. With the forest in the way, neither has been able to wage a truly successful war, and the continuing wasteland status of the whole area has hampered matters as well.

Currently, the land is at a fragile peace which may shatter as soon as one side or the other feels driven by the continued slow growth of the Virik al Ragoon to make war on each other once more. Both states press against the Jen and the Tangor states, seeking further room to grow beyond the wastes, but also seeking control of the wastelands, which still contain much valuable lore and provide access to the dangerous resources of the Virik al Ragoon. Neither can afford to let the other have sole access to the forest, and thus they struggle for lands hardly worth the battle. War seems inevitable, but ever more futile.

Further complicating matters, however, are whispers of the birth of a Holy Messenger, sent by the Immortals to finally bring peace between humans and the Virik al Ragoon, who will unite the lands and cleanse them, bringing about a new age of peace. Only time will tell if this is truth or a hopeful lie.

I think it would be pretty cool if I could ever find the time to finish it.

Just to bring things back to the Myconids, they'd fit into this by being the mutated descendents of the technicians caught in the place by the big boom; the Drakhaba Al Kaloön is now creating their perfect world, and the Rigoon al Asagir protect them. But of course, invaders still try to find them and rob their various fungal concoctions...

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Naga

I'll do all the Nagas in one go; they're pretty interesting but not *that* interesting.

Nagas are essentially big snakes with human heads, who have powerful magical abilities and enjoy meditation, learning languages (they can speak at least four) and setting traps for humanoid creatures. They have poisonous bites and the biggest ones can constrict. We see in their entry a welcome return for the Monster Armour trope: their hides can be made into *scale mail* (natch) +2.

Nagas are very long lived and thus a great source of information on the areas surrounding their lair. I like the idea of a giant snake meditating in some Himalayan mountain valley or hidden cave, waiting for hardy adventurers to come and consult with them. Why do sages and wise men have to be humans, anyway?

Hey, the boss of the Royal Teratological Society could be a *Naga*!

Guardian Naga

Guardian Nagas are one of the rare instances of a mean Lawful Good creature - i.e. one which doesn't seem to mind spitting poison about and killing people. If only Kirin, Lammasu and the like were like that. They often find employment as - shock! - guardians for treasure and so forth.

Spirit Naga

These Chaotic Evil Nagas like killing people even more than the Guardians do; their hobby is setting traps around their territory, but they can also *charm* with their gaze and bite to inject poison - although weirdly there's no information about what the poison does. Their favourite food is rotting flesh, so you know they're evil.

Water Naga

As you would expect, these live in freshwater bodies and like to keep to themselves. I imagine one living in a pool at the base of a waterfall, completely inaccessible to outsiders except for those willing to abseil down a sheer rockface and risk drowning at the bottom.

Dark Naga

Dark Nagas get their own entry in the MM, but not their own post in this thread, as I suspect discussion about them can be folded into that of Nagas generally. Dark Nagas are mainly distinguished from other kinds by having a special sac for storing items within their bodies, and continual ESP. Unlike the other kinds of Naga, which like to keep themselves to themselves, Dark Nagas don't mind commanding evil humanoids, and seem geared to be a kind of lieutenant for a BBEG in a campaign.

The Last Conformist

02-09-2009 05:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9953977)

Why do sages and wise men have to be humans, anyway?

Because if they were nagas they'd be snages and wise wyrms. :p

migo

02-09-2009 06:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9946958)

Technically fungi are an entire Kingdom, so one species eating another is no different from a human eating a cow, fish or grasshopper. Which I suppose is creepy if you're a vegetarian.

Let's turn it around and imagine that, to fungus people, humans are as delicious as we find a portobello or truffle. We're like their delicacies, only to be consumed on rare occasions or at banquets.

Good point. I wasn't thinking about the 5 kingdoms. In that case it works fine.

Wakboth

02-09-2009 06:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9953977)

Why do sages and wise men have to be humans, anyway?

Hey, the boss of the Royal Teratological Society could be a Naga!

Guardian and water nagas are among the more easily "civilized" monsters, IMO. In a Planescape game, I had a Sigilian dance hall that was owned and operated by a family of water nagas.

Gynosphinxes also make very good sages and such.

DMH

02-09-2009 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Spirit nagas are nasty because the charm effect can't be broken by the victim after the initial failed save. Some one could be a slave to a spirit naga for decades (or longer for elves and dwarves).

I like water nagas because they are decent alienish people. How does a fish/snake/human think? The one time I used them was as opponents of a lake dwelling mer tribe. Both were created by a wizard long before the campaign and each attempted to do the master's will (breeding his other monsters) even though he had died centuries before.

Unlike the guardian and spirit, I can see water nagas taking class levels (druid or ranger).

Sleeper

02-09-2009 11:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9954136)

Guardian and water nagas are among the more easily "civilized" monsters, IMO. In a Planescape game, I had a Sigilian dance hall that was owned and operated by a family of water nagas.

With good special effects and choreography, that would make an awesome backdrop for a movie. Nagas undulating, intertwining. Shimmering scales, looping coils, human yet alien eyes. Men and women of various races leaping, twisting, gesturing; everything from the formal to the frenzied to the erotic. Bellydances to ballroom to body slams. Could be hypnotic.

6inTruder

02-10-2009 03:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

ooh! Dark Naga, one of my single favourite monsters in that book! (though I'm not over keen on their 4ed version)

Why do I like them? Because they're like a REALLY weird evil adventurer. I think they equivelent out to about 3rd or 4th level magic-user (it's the second half of their Habitat/Society entry), and I like this bit in their ecology...

Quote:

Dark nagas spend their lives outwardly working with, or serving, others. Whenever possible, however, they also pursue private goals, which may be as whimsical and odd as some human goals ("cover this desert valley with trees, for instance), but always include increasing their personal power by acquiring new spells and magical items.

Also the Ditelizzi picture. Which rocks.

Wakboth

02-10-2009 03:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9955026)

With good special effects and choreography, that would make an awesome backdrop for a movie. Nagas undulating intertwining. Shimmering scales, looping coils, human yet alien eyes. Men and women of various races leaping, twisting, gesturing; everything from the formal to the frenzied to the erotic. Bellydances to ballroom to body slams. Could be hypnotic.

Yup, that was pretty much what I had in mind. I always liked to use monsters like that in PS; the setting seemed tailor-made to have oddball stuff like that.

EmperorSeth

02-10-2009 05:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by migo (Post 9954116)

Good point. I wasn't thinking about the 5 kingdoms. In that case it works fine.

Five?

I only remember using one Naga in my games, and it was a good Guardian. He was one of many monsters that secretly worked for a local prime minister. He was guarding an artifact the party had to retrieve when another monster rose up and ate it! It mostly spent the fight flitting about casting spells, but at one point it noticed a target (the monster had multiple parts, healing through attached "roots,") had DR and the party was totally failing to get through. So it said "screw it" and went crazy with its bite.

demiurge1138

02-10-2009 06:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 9956628)

Five?

The "five kingdoms" model consists of Monera, Fungi, Plantae, Animalia and Protista. It's been pretty much discarded for the three domains--Bacteria, Archaea and Eukaryota--with Fungi, Animals and Plants as three lineages within the eukaryotes and protists as any eukaryote which doesn't fit into those three neat categories.

Anyway. Nagas?

I never got why dark nagas were the ones that got their own separate entry. It seems that any of the four naga species would have benefited from a full page. Were dark nagas originally introduced separately or something?

JRM

02-10-2009 06:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9953977)

Naga

Dark Naga

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I believe the reason Dark Nagas have their own entry is a carry-over from how they were originally published. In the 1E Monster Manual (and the 2E Monstrous Compendium IIRC) the Naga entry only has the Guardian, Spirit and Water Naga. The Dark Naga appeared in a later supplement (MM2 in 1E unless I'm mistaken, one of the Appendixes for 2E). Thus, it was easier to simply reprint the original pages with the Dark Naga as its own entry and the other three nagas lumped together in one entry rather than re-edit them into one entry.

Getting back to topic, most uses of Nagas I've seen in D&D they're been solitary or small groups of monsters, with few links to other creatures. Even the aforementioned habit of Dark Nagas acting as a master villain's lieutenant hasn't been something I've seen in play very much. However, in Indian mythology nagas are sometimes very social creatures, living in cities and even Kingdoms of their own kind - usually these are the "hidden underwater kingdom" kind of thing, which I guess would make them Water Nagas in AD&D terms. Furthermore, some nagas could shapechange into human form and would even marry and have offspring with humans.

Surely there's material for an AD&D session here - have a Kingdom of the Naga, maybe the naga are just the ruling class, and the bulk of the population are reptilian humanoids of various kinds. I'd dump the default alignments, so that Guardian Naga vizier you must deal with to get your audience with the Queen is just as likely to be a scheming LE villain as the traditional LG. (Well he's a vizier, it'd be an insult to *tradition* for him not to be a scheming LE villain ;)). I'd probably add a few other kinds of naga, like a "Royal Naga" (innate shapeshift to human form, higher level spellcasting, has the charm & venom of a Spirit Naga and the powerful bite & constricting tail of a Guardian Naga) and maybe a "common naga" that only has 5-6 HD and lacks a poisonous bite. (Perhaps these are lizard men who have been given this shape as a reward by the Nagas, who believe they may be reincarnated as the the next stage up the naga hierarchy if they lead exemplary lives?)

Sleeper

02-10-2009 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9956892)

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Not quite. Water, guardian, and spirit nagas date all the way back to OD&D (*The Strategic Review* #3's "Creature

Feature" in 1975, and then Supplement IV), whereas the dark naga first appeared in *Dragon* #89's "Creature Catalog" in 1984 (there weren't any nagas in *MM2*). Unlike their kin, dark nagas were then hidden away for most of 2nd edition in the *Forgotten Realms* supplements, until they were folded into the *Monstrous Manual*. I always felt the dark naga was completely unnecessary. There's really no need for another one dimensional and cartoonishly evil monster, especially when the original three already covered that niche with considerably more subtlety. I definitely got a distinct sword & sorcery vibe from the first three. I can easily see them appearing in one of the morally ambiguous Conan stories. An abandoned citadel of a lost people, or a temple of a forgotten god. Relics of ancient and inhuman power, or deceitfully deadly treasure. Servant or slave of a wicked sorcerer, or the veiled power behind a priesthood.

Wakshaani

02-10-2009 07:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9956892)

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Naga, meet Yaun-Ti; Yaun-Ti, meet Naga.

There's another Naga introduced in 3.5's miniatures Handbook, a Bright Naga, which is, by far and away, teh weakest of teh set, lacking poison in the bite attack and only being able to cast a single 1st level spell as a 3rd level Sorcerer. Poor lil' guy! (My party'll be fighting one in a week and a half, mind you.)

Still, there's lots of untapped love, here, for non-lizard reptillian goodness.

JRM

02-10-2009 08:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9956982)

Not quite. Water, guardian, and spirit nagas date all the way back to OD&D (The Strategic Review #3's "Creature Feature" in 1975, and then Supplement IV), whereas the dark naga first appeared in Dragon #89's "Creature Catalog" in 1984 (there weren't any nagas in MM2). Unlike their kin, dark nagas were then hidden away for most of 2nd edition in the Forgotten Realms supplements, until they were folded into the Monstrous Manual. I always felt the dark naga was completely unnecessary. There's really no need for another one dimensional and cartoonishly evil monster, especially when the original three already covered that niche with considerably more subtlety. I definitely got a distinct sword & sorcery vibe from the first three. I can easily see them appearing in one of the morally ambiguous Conan stories. An abandoned citadel of a lost people, or a temple of a forgotten god. Relics of ancient

and inhuman power, or deceitfully deadly treasure. Servant or slave of a wicked sorcerer, or the veiled power behind a priesthood.

Ta Sleeper, I couldn't be bothered looking them up so just called on my fading memory. The annoying thing is I've got both those products (pdf for the Strategic Review, hardcopy & pdf for the Dragon), and as soon as you mentioned the source this little virtual lightbulb went on over my head as I remembered reading them.

As for Nagas in morally ambiguous Conan stories, Robert E Howard beat you to it in **The God in the Bowl**, or is that what you were referring to? Although, I suppose in D&D terms that monster would have been an Undead Naga, since it was entombed in a bowl-shaped sarcophagus.

6inTruder

02-10-2009 08:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oh, and for records (or at least to the best of my knowledge) the Dark Naga came from the second FRC.

JRM

02-10-2009 08:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9957063)
Naga, meet Yaun-Ti; Yaun-Ti, meet Naga.

Yes, I thought about mentioning the Yuan-Ti but decided against it. I think of them as a corrupted mongrel descendants of a serpentine (or snake worshipping) civilization, while the Naga Kingdom I was imagining was more a "hidden eldritch kingdom" kind of deal, like an underworld drow city but underwater and not evil, or maybe just not **all** evil.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9957063)
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First time I've heard of the Bright Naga, but it makes sense to have a low CR naga.

Hmm, maybe Bright Naga are not a separate species, but are just kids who haven't learned to fight or cast spells as well as the full-grown Nagas. For that matter, maybe the three original kinds of nagas are not different species but are more like classes (equivalent to a Water-Wizard, Priest and Sorcerer for Water, Guardian and Spirit Naga?), while the Dark Naga is a separate species, which would explain it having a tail-sting unlike the other nagas.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9957063)

Still, there's lots of untapped love, here, for non-lizard reptilian goodness.

Oh yes, I'm trying to decide how Coatls would fit into this Naga kingdom. Maybe the Nagas see them as messengers of the Snake Goddess, their equivalent of angels?

Sleeper

02-10-2009 09:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9957281)

*As for Nagas in morally ambiguous Conan stories, Robert E Howard beat you to it in **The God in the Bowl**, or is that what you were referring to? Although, I suppose in D&D terms that monster would have been an Undead Naga, since it was entombed in a bowl-shaped sarcophagous.*

I vaguely remembered a story, though not the title. But I was trying to make a more general point. One specific story is too confining. There are many possibilities.

YojimboC

02-10-2009 10:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

This puts me in mind of the great Naga-Rakshasha Wars of the Second Age (after the lizardfolk, bullywug, and yellow mold kingdoms collapsed). Throw in some Sahuagin (Daityas by another name?) for flavor.

YojimboC

02-12-2009 02:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Or, y'know, something cooler. :(

Hey, how about those gnolls, huh? Everybody loves those guys!

Mr. Teapot

02-12-2009 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

RE: Myconids

One thing that occurs to me about Myconids is that the largest living thing on earth is (debatably) a series of mushrooms, which were shown to all be one entity that spanned acres.

Perhaps the Myconids aren't a colony of individual fungus-men. They're just a single giant fungus man, who humans mistake for a lot of human sized fungus men.

There's an issue of them no being physically connected, but in D&D they could all be a contiguous mass on the Ethereal or Astral plane or something. Or all be clones of one master Myconid (the aforementioned Myconid king). Or all controlled by a single consciousness.

A bit late, though, I know.

Sleeper

02-12-2009 04:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9966108)

RE: Myconids

One thing that occurs to me about Myconids is that the largest living thing on earth is (debatably) a series of mushrooms, which were shown to all be one entity that spanned acres.

Perhaps the Myconids aren't a colony of individual fungus-men. They're just a single giant fungus man, who humans mistake for a lot of human sized fungus men.

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To run with that a little, the majority of the biomass within the fungal colony is underground. We never see it, buried and running shoe-lace like runners between the tree roots. Only the fruiting bodies (mushrooms) are visible, where they sprout and grow from the trees.

Perhaps that why we don't see myconids outside their colonies. Buried deep in the loam beneath their shadowed forest dwellings, or within the walls of a cavern system of dirt and dangling roots, is the true myconid. The colony. What we can "myconids" are just the fruiting bodies. The sex organs, as it were. Spreading spores, sprouting. Mobile, but limited. Because they need to stay connected. Those dangling strands and fibrous tendrils hanging from the ceilings and running underfoot are rhizomorphs, and a dozen run into each mobile myconid. Their connection, their very life depends on it; but it is also a tether. They cannot leave the colony. They cannot even cross the colony. Each has its own limited range.

The only tetherless myconid is the king. Rhizomorphs severed, separated from the dreaming consciousness of the greater myconid that surrounds it, it becomes capable of wandering the entire colony, even leaving. But perishing, soon to die. Their ambassador, envoy, even assassin. But also a fruit, dropped from the tree, doomed to rot and die. How silly that these outsiders, these silly plants and animals, called it "king".

noisms

02-12-2009 09:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Neogi

Neogi are one of my all time favourite D&D races in theory, but I don't believe I've ever managed to get around to using them in a game. I'm really not sure why, because they make for a great unified BBEG. I'd even like to throw away the line that they only live in "very remote locations, deep beneath the earth, or among the farthest stars" - how cool would it be to have a Neogi empire as one of the main polities in a homebrew world?

Neogi have the early sci-fi feel of many Spelljammer monsters, the way each has a personal Umber Hulk slave, and a liking for colourful fashion, and a tendency to develop into a great fat ant-Queen type monstrosity as it ages. Even Neogi's half-moray eel half-spider appearance is way more gonzo than what you typically find in D&D. It's all good stuff.

The way Neogi reproduce is nicely grotesque too: being poisoned and fattened until you explode and release a new batch of children who then fight to the death is hardly ideal from a personal point of view, but a great vignette for an adventure. The brave heroes fight their way through to the middle of the Neogi city, whereupon they discover... a huge Neogi who explodes and releases a host of newly born killing machines.

Reaver

A Neogi Reaver is one who has decided to escape the fate of becoming a Great Old Master and turned outcast. That in itself is a good adventure hook - the Reaver could offer all kinds of rewards in return for the protection of the heroes... but of course, with a catch.

Thane of Fife

02-12-2009 09:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I could never quite reconcile the fact that Neogi are 3 feet tall with their having 5 Hit Dice. Giant Spiders had to be somewhere around 12' in diameter before qualifying for that many hit dice.

But I agree that they were fascinating as alien villains.

6inTruder

02-12-2009 10:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Do people prefer their Neogi handless, as these are; or with rudimentary hands, like in 3ed?

Personally I like these way more. Or at least a little bit. Just seem more alien (and I like the literal eel stuck to a spider look).

demiurge1138

02-12-2009 10:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I've always thought of the neogi as with hands.

That way, I can give them ray-guns.

Wakboth

02-12-2009 03:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I definitely think of Neogi as having small, dextrous hands (maybe the claws in their front legs?). They're good at fiddly stuff, bad at carrying or pushing big things... but that's what they've got the Umber Hulks for!

Have any of you read Neal Asher's *Polity* series? I think the Neogi, with their callous cruelty and paranoia, and slave-driving ways, are a pretty good match for *Spelljammer* Prador, minus the whole "honking big, psychopathic space-crab with very hard armor" thing... but again, that's what they've got the Umber Hulks for! :D

demiurge1138

02-12-2009 04:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Oh! Oh! I came to a realization about neogi somewhere around "grell" in this series, and I almost forgot it!

The neogi are the D&D versions of the Skeksis from *The Dark Crystal*.

They are decadent slave-takers who believe that might makes right. Their society is full of weird trials to prove their own superiority. They rely on enormous insectile beasts for heavy lifting and for defense. The Skeksis drain life from their slaves to stay young; the neogi drain life from their slaves to power their ships.

noisms

02-12-2009 05:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 9967571)

I could never quite reconcile the fact that Neogi are 3 feet tall with their having 5 Hit Dice. Giant Spiders had to be somewhere around 12' in diameter before qualifying for that many hit dice.

But I agree that they were fascinating as alien villains.

Yeah, I prefer to imagine my Neogi being 5' tall at least. It's hard to take them seriously if they're only 3'.

EmperorSeth

02-12-2009 05:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9968953)

Yeah, I prefer to imagine my Neogi being 5' tall at least. It's hard to take them seriously if they're only 3'.

I figure it just makes them work more as evil masterminds. They're not supposed to engage the party up close; they're supposed to hang in the back while their umberhulks and other slaves do the fighting. If they're in 4th edition, they're probably artillery or controllers.

Let me check...

Nope, not even in the book. Well, still, I bet the default Neogi's better at keeping his distance while fighting.

Checking again...

Nope, not really. Honestly, their powers kind of suck. They slow with a bite? Yay. Well, all the more reason to hide from enemies and chomp on fools who get close, I guess.

Mr. Teapot

02-13-2009 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9967378)

Neogi

Neogi are one of my all time favourite D&D races in theory, but I don't believe I've ever managed to get around to using them in a game.

Neogi are good villains. Besides the weird alien physical form, they have a weird alien culture entirely based on slavery (which is clearly evil, clearly distinct from humanoid cultures but still comprehensible and playable at the game table).

And the fact that Neogi themselves fear their own reproductive methods? That's cool, and creepy. Probably implausible, but cool and creepy.

We had a Neogi show up in our game that was supposed to become a 3rd/4th ed Spelljammer game, but never got very far off the ground. The Neogi in question hired the PCs to free a city from a gang of mind flayer tyrannical overlords. We did so, but having an evil, vicious and cruel little spider monster as our patron was very interesting. And fun, in that the good aligned PCs had some moral uncertainty about helping the little bugger. My former slave warrior wanted to kill the mind flayers, then go kill the Neogi (or vice versa), but we couldn't find him once we freed the city.

(We did kill another Neogi and claim his spelljamming vessel and his UMBER HULKS, on the way to the illithid city. The UMBER HULKS decided they were our slaves now; the PCs tried and failed to dissuade them of this.)

But using Neogi as shadowy patrons, morally ambiguous allies and manipulators behind the scenes has a lot of potential.

Wakshaani

02-13-2009 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 9971390)

I figure it just makes them work more as evil masterminds. They're not supposed to engage the party up close; they're supposed to hang in the back while their umberhulks and other slaves do the fighting. If they're in 4th edition they're probably artillery or controllers.

Never used 'em (Too Spelljammer-y), but, I have *no* problem with a 3' tall guy with giant thugs... Neogi with UMBER Hulks, Halfling hitmen with Half-Orc muscle, and, of course, this guy:

<http://looney.goldenagecartoons.com/tv/bbrr/thugs.jpg>

Ragnarok_Engine

02-13-2009 10:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 9968865)

Oh! Oh! I came to a realization about neogi somewhere around "grell" in this series, and I almost forgot it!

The neogi are the D&D versions of the Skeksis from The Dark Crystal.

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Whenever I thought about neogi, I could never get the image of Mojo from New Mutants out of my head. So, not only were they creepy slave-keeping spider-eel people, but they also had an unhealthy fascination with bloodsports involving sentients.

http://images2.wikia.nocookie.net/ma...a/Mojo_001.jpg

JRM

02-14-2009 04:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9966108)

SNIP

Perhaps the Myconids aren't a colony of individual fungus-men. They're just a single giant fungus man, who humans mistake for a lot of human sized fungus men.

There's an issue of them no being physically connected, but in D&D they could all be a contiguous mass on the Ethereal or Astral plane or something. Or all be clones of one master Myconid (the aforementioned Myconid king). C

all controlled by a single consciousness.

SNIP

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 9966404)

To run with that a little, the majority of the biomass within the fungal colony is underground. We never see it, buried and running shoe-lace like runners between the tree roots. Only the fruiting bodies (mushrooms) are visible, where they sprout and grow from the trees.

Perhaps that why we don't see myconids outside their colonies. Buried deep in the loam beneath their shadowed forest dwellings, or within the walls of a cavern system of dirt and dangling roots, is the true myconid. The colony. What we can "myconids" are just the fruiting bodies. The sex organs, as it were. Spreading spores, sprouting. Mobile but limited. Because they need to stay connected. Those dangling strands and fibrous tendrils hanging from the ceilings and running underfoot are rhizomorphs, and a dozen run into each mobile myconid. Their connection, their very life depends on it; but it is also a tether. They cannot leave the colony. They cannot even cross the colony. Each has its own limited range.

The only tetherless myconid is the king. Rhizomorphs severed, separated from the dreaming consciousness of the greater myconid that surrounds it, it becomes capable of wandering the entire colony, even leaving. But perishing, soon to die. Their ambassador, envoy, even assassin. But also a fruit, dropped from the tree, doomed to rot and die. How silly that these outsiders, these silly plants and animals, called it "king".

Great minds think alike! I was having very similar thoughts a couple of days ago, but didn't have access to the computer at the time so left off posting it.

Anyhows, my idea was that as mushroom circles are formed at the edge of a rhizome-mass, maybe each "circle" of Myconids is a separate individual with twenty bodies, so a Myconid settlement has only a handful of individual fungusfolk in it. The Circles, linked to their underground main masses, are each one individual, plus the autonomous King.

When a circle of myconids does its eight hours of 'melding' they are integrating with each other through their main rhizome mass, literally plugging into it with their feet. Without this integration the semi-anthropoid fungus men lose their minds and then their lives, and the underground rhizome mass is denied the food that the fungus-men transfer to it with their feet, so it would eventually die as well. If some of the humanoid myconids die, the main mass can just regrow them, since a circle shares memories among itself they will usually only lose the few hours of memory from after the last time the dead body's downloaded and a bit of bodymass, and maybe not even that if the Myconids recover the dead bodies of their fallen selves.

I'd think the Myconid rhizome masses are only a small portion of the fungal life in a colony, there'd be lots of other symbiotic and commensal fungal life forms which perform important functions for the colony - crops, livestock, shelter, tools or weapons/guardians. There are plenty of dangerous ambulatory fungi in D&D that the Myconids could co-opt to their service.

The King is a walking rhizome mass, able to act without melding for a long time and seek out places to establish new colonies. Maybe it's not so much a monarch, as a child. When it finds a suitable spot, it roots itself into the ground and spreads out as a new Circle, becoming an adult Myconid.

JRM

02-14-2009 04:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9971580)

And the fact that Neogi themselves fear their own reproductive methods? That's cool, and creepy. Probably implausible, but cool and creepy.

What do you find implausible about it? Having an alien species which dies after spawning offspring isn't that fantastic, although one were the offspring apparently parasitize their parent is a nasty twist. Presumably on the neogi homeworld there are many other lifeforms that reproduce in this fashion but just lack the sentience to comprehend their reproductive habits, so do not fear it.

I do have a strong suspicion that the reference to 'poison' being used to trigger the transformation is a euphemism to spare the minds of other races (or younger AD&D readers). What I suspect really happens is that all neogi are hermaphrodites, and when they are old enough develop viable eggs within them. The mature eggs produce enzymes which cause the degradation in the neogi's intellect, and also attract the attention of all the other neogi, who will have a overpowering instinct to, ah *fertilize* those eggs. In other words, they inject sperm into the proto-Great Old Master, which migrates through their bodies until it reaches the eggs (in a similar fashion to how the giant squid *Architeuthis dux* reproduces). Now, I suppose the neogi may have a specialized "stabbing organ" just for mating with, but they've already got venomous fangs so maybe these are multi-purpose.

Although, come to think of it, maybe the "Great Old Master" poison and the regular poison is one and the same. After all, it is just as useful to slow the resisting mate than a meal. Although it seems likely to me that a regular bite would be one that, if you'll pardon the expression, does not shoot the full reproductive load into the victim, but just some of the neurotoxin fluids that its sperm is stored and transported in.

Regardless, it's best not to worry about what a neogi may really be doing to your character when it bites them.
:eek:

I'm reminded of the film *Slither*, which featured a parasitic space monster that turned some of its victims into "wombs" by impaling them with two spiked tentacles which injected a milky fluid. One of that film's heroes got stuck by just one such tentacle, and was assured by a person who had survived a mind-meld with the alien that they would have to get stuck by both tentacles to go all wormy. I couldn't help thinking "well obviously one tentacle-spike injects eggs and the other sperm".

Shame that film did poor box office, I thought it was a nice little SF-horror-comedy film of a kind I'd have liked to see more of.

Harrison

02-14-2009 04:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Holy hell, JRM, that's a creepy elaboration. Well done.

DMH

02-14-2009 05:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The example given in SJ for showing neogi intelligence isn't subtle but it is interesting. A fleet owner will have several mindspiders (50 ton ships) and deathspiders (100 ton ships) and will use one of the mindspiders as its command ship. Since tonnage means a lot in SJ, putting oneself on a more fragile vessel is a risk but it also plays to the human(oid)

idea that the flag ship will be the largest.

Mikaze

02-14-2009 06:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I don't mind Dark Sun monsters being in the MM. I did feel the Kirre wasn't exactly alien enough to fit in with what I expected from Dark Sun though.

Mind, since I never actually played Dark Sun all I ever knew about it was what could be gleaned from one novel I read and all the Brom artwork for the setting.

JRM

02-14-2009 08:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Herrison (Post 9976571)
Holy hell, JRM, that's a creepy elaboration. Well done.

Thank ye kindly, just doing my bit.

The way that neogi seal their pre-sapient young in a breeding chamber and leave them to fight each other to death for food is also curious. There are animals which practice infant on infant cannibalism, but mostly this is only when no other food is available. Most creatures of animal intelligence (in AD&D terms) or greater would feed their young, some of the more ruthless (e.g. owls) resorting to feeding their weaker young to the stronger when no other food can be caught. I can think of some realworld animals which do something similar, like a few live-birthing sharks where the young start cannibalizing each other *before they are born*, but the neogi cannibalism doesn't work like this. So, why don't the neogi feed them? You'd expect at least some neogi settlement to have the capacity to feed 20-40 young potential slaves.

Maybe it's connected to intelligence and their slave-master instinct? Neogi are barely sentient at birth, perhaps not all of them develop their full intelligence and recognition of the master/slave instinct. Those young that have well developed minds and master/slave instinct swiftly form a hierarchy and can co-operate to kill the rest, who fight individually. The survivors, then are the ones with the intelligence and obedience to be useful slaves to the community. Of course, an 85% attrition rate is very low, you'd think that there'd be a strong selection to evolve more young with the necessary brain power.

Alternatively, the neogi young may have to eat each other to acquire adult intelligence, there might be elements in a neogi's body they have to eat to develop their brains. I doubt they have to eat eat other purely for food as stated. If I recall correctly, newborn neogi are full sized. It's quite feasible to get 20-40 3' tall neogi inside one 20' tall Great Old Master. If a neogi really has to eat the flesh of five or six other neogis per week just to survive they'd have to burn calories as fast as a shrew, which (a) would probably give them quite different stats and an emphasis on their ravenous appetites and (b) their population would have to be very low compared to their livestock, plus their ships would have to contain enormous foodstores. They probably need the Umber Hulks just to stock their larders!

Sleeper

02-14-2009 08:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Rumors....

Neogi aren't spiders. They're *eels*. That thing you think you see scuttling around? That's just a lobotomy patient. The only part that's truly neogi, is the twisting head. The tail end is permanently grafted in where the brain of the spider once was.

Ever wonder about umber hulks? The eyes that glitter, the mandibles that catch, on what would otherwise be a fairly bog-standard humanoid? Some neogi are mean. They don't just lobotomize their hosts. They *extract* them, with all the delicate precision of a Gray eviscerating a cow. Then they implant them, in a big brutish humanoid type. Carefully, so the gaping jaws remain intact. Drives them completely, bug-fuck insane, naturally. That's why their eyes are so creepy. There's not a primate inside, a mammal, or even a vertebrate. That's an arthropod. A creepy-crawly. One of humanity's nightmares, except even by its own standards, it's mad.

noisms

02-14-2009 08:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

On the subject of creatures being afraid of their own reproductive methods, snails and bedbugs have pretty nasty ways of getting it on. Snails fire darts into each other's bodies to deliver semen, while a bedbug's male genitalia have to pierce the exoskeleton of the female when he mates - a process called "traumatic insemination".

So the Neogi method isn't *that* unusual.

Still unusual, mind.

JRM

02-14-2009 09:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9977504)

On the subject of creatures being afraid of their own reproductive methods, snails and bedbugs have pretty nasty ways of getting it on. Snails fire darts into each other's bodies to deliver semen, while a bedbug's male genitalia have to pierce the exoskeleton of the female when he mates - a process called "traumatic insemination".

No, the snail's love dart injects hormones that increase the dart-stabbing snail's chances of fertilizing its partner via semen delivered through the conventional manner (i.e. rumpy-pumpy). Of course, the snails (and some slugs) in question are hermaphrodites, so they may be love-darting each other.

I'm sure Wikipedia will be our friend on this ... yup, here's its **love dart** entry.

Mr. Teapot

02-14-2009 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9976534)

What do you find implausible about it? Having an alien species which dies after spawning offspring isn't that fantastic,

I didn't say that a species dying to reproduce was implausible (that happens here on Earth). I said that a species that feared its own reproductive system, and took steps to prevent its own reproduction, was implausible.

Because if a creature doesn't want to reproduce, then its genes don't get carried on. And its neighbors who do like reproducing do get to carry their genes on, and have a clear evolutionary advantage. That's why sex is a big drive in humans, and almost every other species.

Now, I was talking about the Neogi as written in the MM, wherein the neogi born are apparently genetic clones of the Great Old Master. In such a case, a neogi would have a genetic drive to reproduce: on a genetic level, there would be a big advantage to having 3-6 neogi carrying on the genes instead of just one.

But if you assume that the neogi are impregnating each other, then the equation is different: each neogi wants a different neogi to die and to carry on their genes. Impregnation is a small cost, but actually bearing the children is a large cost biologically, including the death of the individual neogi. Then their fear is much more reasonable, and you get a host of neogi constantly trying to impregnate each other. Which makes for ready made rivalries among the villains, to be exploited by the PCs. And adds Rape to the list of crimes inherent to Neogi life (murder and slavery already on there), reinforcing them as villains.

(I was also assuming that Reavers/rogue neogi aren't anomalous neogi: somewhere I picked up the idea that all neogi fear their reproductive cycle, though that was not here. Maybe I got that idea from some Spelljammer supplement or maybe from my own mind. But I assumed that Reavers/rogue neogi were just neogi who succeeded at something every other neogi would want to do themselves. If you assume Reavers are rare exceptions to larger neogi culture, somewhat like celibate human beings, then you could argue that their sentience can override their natural drives. But I assumed the fear of reproduction was universal for the species... and "celibate" human beings are not exactly 100% successful at suppressing their drive.)

noisms

02-15-2009 10:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9979555)

I didn't say that a species dying to reproduce was implausible (that happens here on Earth). I said that a species that feared its own reproductive system, and took steps to prevent its own reproduction, was implausible.

Because if a creature doesn't want to reproduce, then its genes don't get carried on. And its neighbors who do like reproducing do get to carry their genes on, and have a clear evolutionary advantage. That's why sex is a big drive in humans, and almost every other species.

Although lots of humans appear to fear reproduction... How many childless couples are there in New York, London, Paris or Tokyo? ;) Sorry, I'm being a bit facetious there. Maybe most Neogi (the non-Reavers) kid themselves into thinking that being a Great Old Master is prestigious? That would explain the name, and also explain why they don't usually flee their fate.

Of course, explaining how this reproductive system evolved is a tough one. Then again, imagine if praying mantis evolved to sentience. Try convincing me to have sex with you if you're going to (in the non-innuendo sense) eat me afterwards. I don't care if you look like Jessica Alba, it ain't going to happen.

As is often the case with the MM, trying to think about these things sensibly is just a recipe for making your head hurt.

The Last Conformist

02-15-2009 07:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9976534)

What do you find implausible about it? Having an alien species which dies after spawning offspring isn't that fantastic, although one were the offspring apparently parasitize their parent is a nasty twist.

Nasty it may be, but not unknown on this fair Earth. One of the standards for reproductive weirdness is *Micromalthus debilis*, a beetle where male eggs stick to the mother; when the larva eventually hatches it promptly eats its mother.

JRM

02-16-2009 07:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9979555)

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snip

Oh sorry about that, I was misreading you there.

As you say, if the other neogi are impregnating the Great Old Master that is not an issue, since the anomalous neogi can perpetuate its genes by causing other neogis to give birth.

There is another possibility, that the genes that create an anomalous rogue neogi which does not reproduce also increase the reproductive success of its close relatives - maybe they make a neogi particularly cautious/paranoid and hence more likely to reach an old age, when it begins eligible for Great Old Mastership, so a rogue neogi's siblings are more likely to reproduce.

Even if a Great Old Master (I'll just start calling it a GOM) reproduces asexually or is a self-fertilizing hermaphrodites, all of its offspring need not be completely identical. They could be sensitive to some biochemistry (e.g. variations in the hormones of different parts of the GOM's flesh or the poisons it was injected with) that causes significant changes in development, or any of the myriad factors that can influence how a foetus grows.

noisms

02-16-2009 10:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Nightmare

Tough one this. It isn't a *bad* monster at all - in fact, it's quite a nice idea, even if the whole concept is basically a ridiculously obvious and banal pun. I kind of like over-the-top evil creatures, and you don't get much more over-the-top evil than the nightmare, with its black fur and red eyes and noxious vapour emissions. You would never come across one and say to yourself, "Hang on, he could be a nice guy, it's difficult to tell." And it's good to have something big and hard for BBEGs to ride around on.

The problem is that, really, what do you do with the anti-Shadowfax? Shadowfax, no matter how Tolkien tried, was only ever just a horse. And so are nightmares; nasty and tough perhaps, but really just a steed. What can you do with them other than have them be the mount of some vile necromancer or anti-paladin?

There's also the issue of, well....frankly, silliness:

Quote:

Once per decade, on the plane of Hades, there is a dark and sinister time called Gloom Meet. At this time the various lower planar denizens will meet and decide how they will spread their will for the next decade. The nightmares play a special role in Gloom Meet, for they spread the word that the meeting is about to begin. As the Gloom Meet approaches, there is a higher concentration of nightmares and their frequency changes from very rare to uncommon. This is the first indication that Gloom Meet is to occur, and lasts for approximately two weeks. Immediately prior to the meeting, the nightmares ride the planes in a terrifying charge that notifies all that the Gloom Meet has started.

Come on, "meet and decide how they will spread their will for the next decade"...? Gimme a break. This is weak, lame, naff, and any other pejorative adjective you care to name. It's like something from a bad kid's horror story.

6inTruder

02-16-2009 10:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

check out the book [Raum](#) for a bit of nightmare action. Not much, but a touch to work the whole hell-steed angle.

Squizzle

02-16-2009 01:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

If the conclusion of first pregnancy is invariably lethal (biologically costly), but impregnation isn't, then there would probably be some sort of self-induced abortion mechanism evolved into the neogi. It would not be too especially effective (because that would cause the species to die out), but it's probably there. Maybe it's more apt to happen if there is high population density (ergo, more need to prevent pregnancy for resource reasons; also, the odds of passing genes by inseminating instead of birthing are that much better if there are more potential partners around), or copious amounts of resources available (so that the individual is more likely to live long enough to find and impregnate another).

The outcast neogi mentioned might just be those with a genetic quirk that renders their spontaneous abortion faculty especially reliable.

JasonK

02-16-2009 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9984924)

Nightmare

...

The problem is that, really, what do you do with the anti-Shadowfax? Shadowfax, no matter how Tolkien tried, was only ever just a horse. And so are nightmares; nasty and tough perhaps, but really just a steed. What can you do with them other than have them be the mount of some vile necromancer or anti-paladin?

Agreed 100%. I mean, yes, technically, they're reasonably strong monsters of their level. But... well... they're horses. And I'm not going to say that a horse can't be strong or hurt you if it kicks. But... they lack a certain dignity as a thing to fight on its own.

Which all makes having stats for a Nightmare about as worthwhile as having stats for a horse. Which, of course, we do and which, of course, is reasonably worthwhile as someone might try to attack your horse. Same deal here, I figure.

- jasön

DMH

02-16-2009 08:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Don't forget how intelligent nightmares are. They are powerful enough to dominate a goblin or hobgoblin tribe and could very well be the power behind the chieftain.

(un)reason

02-16-2009 08:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 9986289)

Don't forget how intelligent nightmares are. They are powerful enough to dominate a goblin or hobgoblin tribe and could very well be the power behind the chieftain.

I think their mindset is more like imps and quasits. They prefer to let other people think they're in charge, and then influence things by strategic betrayals. After all, they're one of the primary sources of transport on the lower planes. This means they have a big hold on the economy and politics if they co-ordinate themselves properly. It's like the yugoloths in 2E. Under the guise of being venal treacherous assholes who's only loyalty is to the highest bidder, they can actually get plenty of more subtle evil done and control the balance of the blood war. And they don't even have to pretend they're playing nice while doing it. Everyone expects the lawyer guy with hooves and horns to screw you over, and they probably have an idea of how, just not the exact details. No one suspects the horse. You even get to kick your "master" in the nuts or bite their hands when they're feeding you sometimes, and they'll put up with it, because they think of you as a valuable bit of property rather than a sentient being, and don't want to ruin you. (you could probably get away with even more if you were a night camel, but I think that would be a step too far into comedy territory.)

Wakshaani

02-16-2009 09:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Gloom Meet sounds like a stockholder meeting of the damned.

Wakboth

02-16-2009 10:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 9986421)

Gloom Meet sounds like a stockholder meeting of the damned.

You know, that has potential. Dividends paid in larvae, arguments about whether a particular archdevil deserves the lavish palace he's been building with the work of ten thousand damned slaves, when those slaves

could have been used for furthering evil, yugoloths turning out reams and reams of legalese full of hooks to snare you, and more. And now your evil party has to look for venture capital in the form of a horde of screaming demons!

YojimboC

02-16-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It's true that nightmares aren't much in and of themselves, but they are an important part of the BBEG equation. What is Venger or Lord Soth without his midnight black horse with glowing red eyes? It's true that the Nazgul rode regular ol' black horses, but how much cooler would they have been on nightmares?

Never underestimate an intelligent steed, either. I've recently been using orcs on wargs as antagonists in my game (I know, they should be goblins on wargs), and it's been fun having the mounts be as smart or smarter than the riders.

EmperorSeth

02-16-2009 11:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 9986710)

It's true that nightmares aren't much in and of themselves, but they are an important part of the BBEG equation. What is Venger or Lord Soth without his midnight black horse with glowing red eyes? It's true that the Nazgul rode regular ol' black horses, but how much cooler would they have been on nightmares?

Never underestimate an intelligent steed, either. I've recently been using orcs on wargs as antagonists in my game (I know, they should be goblins on wargs), and it's been fun having the mounts be as smart or smarter than the riders.

Oh, that could be fun, especially if the players hear them argue during the fight. That'll be a way to make those language skills useful! :)

I like the Gloom Meet as a Stock Report of the Damned, too. I might have to get my party to infiltrate that in my next campaign, whenever that may be. The problem with Nightmares as BBEG mounts is if the BBEG are B enough, they probably are too powerful for the Nightmare to last long and since upgraded to a dragon or something. But Nightmares could advance as easily as anything else.

Kakita Kojiro

02-16-2009 11:27 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9984372)

There is another possibility, that the genes that create an anomalous rogue neogi which does not reproduce also increase the reproductive success of its close relatives - maybe they make a neogi particularly cautious/paranoid and hence more likely to reach an old age, when it begins eligible for Great Old Mastership, so a rogue neogi's siblings are more likely to reproduce.

I'd be somewhat leery of using that as an explanation, though. Since that is one hypothesis as to what evolutionary advantage homosexuality might yield, that is inviting comparisons between reaver neogi and gays in our society. Which is... a can of worms I'd rather not open, myself.

Of course, any game where neogi reproduction methods were important to the action is probably fairly unusual, anyway, so maybe not a problem then.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9984924)

Come on, "meet and decide how they will spread their will for the next decade"...? Gimme a break. This is weak, lame, naff, and any other pejorative adjective you care to name. It's like something from a bad kid's horror story.

The Gloom Meet would actually be a very good campaign... *if* you have proactive players. If your players are the rare type who will take the clue of nightmares showing up more frequently, and then stampeding across the lower planes, and run with it -- *then* it would be cool. Deducing that Evil is meeting and scheming, and planning how to infiltrate and whack the Big Bads? that's good stuff.

If, however, you have the run-of-the-mill, lumpish players who only react to what they are presented with, then it turns into a sucky DM-narrated dangling plotohook. Just have to know if the players' reaction to unusual nightmare meetings is "What are they up to?" or "Yeah, whatever. Can I roll on the Random Harlot Table, now?"

DMH

02-16-2009 11:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9986707)

You know, that has potential. Dividends paid in larvae, arguments about whether a particular archdevil deserves the lavish palace he's been building with the work of ten thousand damned slaves, when those slaves could have been used for furthering evil, yugoloths turning out reams and reams of legalese full of hooks to snare you, and more. And now your evil party has to look for venture capital in the form of a horde of screaming demons!

<http://towercoda.net/PDF%20Files/Pact%20System.pdf> One of the pacts is about how PCs can get involved in such a system.

JRM

02-17-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Squizzle (Post 9985405)

If the conclusion of first pregnancy is invariably lethal (biologically costly), but impregnation isn't, then there would probably be some sort of self-induced abortion mechanism evolved into the neogi. It would not be too especially effective (because that would cause the species to die out), but it's probably there. Maybe it's more apt to happen if

there is high population density (ergo, more need to prevent pregnancy for resource reasons; also, the odds of passing genes by inseminating instead of birthing are that much better if there are more potential partners around), or copious amounts of resources available (so that the individual is more likely to live long enough to find and impregnate another).

The outcast neogi mentioned might just be those with a genetic quirk that renders their spontaneous abortion faculty especially reliable.

Well there are plenty of real-world species which die after their first pregnancy, and I can't offhand think of any that can cancel their birth, although some can delay it until conditions are good (e.g. some spiders store sperm until needed to fertilize their eggs, then die after they hatch). There are some animals that can self-abort, including many rodents, but all of the ones I can think of can give birth on more than one occasion.

Although if we consider it another way, your theory could help explain the Great Old Master phenomena. If we assume neogi can 'self-abort', maybe it's not the neogi's eggs/womb/whatever becoming mature that makes them become a "Great Old Master", it's their loss of the self-abort function. i.e. it could be that rather than becoming senile because their eggs have become capable of fertilization, they've become old enough that their self-aborting immune system is starting to fail and they cannot stop their eggs being fertilized. That implies a 'rogue' neogi may just be one who has an unusually healthy old age.

In any case, their reproductive biology may mean that wealthy neogi could be extremely keen to acquire age-reduction magic. If you knew your allies would see to it you exploded into two dozen babies after you age a couple of years, how much would you be willing to spend on a *potion of youth*?

JRM

02-17-2009 03:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9986853)

I'd be somewhat leery of using that as an explanation, though. Since that is one hypothesis as to what evolutionary advantage homosexuality might yield, that is inviting comparisons between reaver neogi and gays in our society. Which is... a can of worms I'd rather not open, myself.

Well although the same underlying principle is involved in the theory I wouldn't be too worried about it, since neogi reproductive biology is obviously nothing like terrestrial male-female reproduction. Since all neogi are the same sex or asexual, none of them can ever try to reproduce with the wrong sex (i.e. one they can never produce infants with).

Furthermore, I would suspect rogue neogi are probably just as keen to create Great Old Masters as regular neogi, they just don't want to be one themselves. They were probably just as keen to poison other neogi into Great Old Masters before they became old enough to be at risk of suffering the same fate. That would mean a rogue neogi is more like a male organism, while regular neogi are hermaphrodites.

If a rogue neogi were powerful enough, with many non-neogi slaves, it might even try to capture other elderly neogi to try to turn them into Great Old Masters, it depends how strong the "Poison Great Old Masters" instinct is.

JasonK

02-17-2009 03:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9987834)

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If a rogue neogi were powerful enough, with many non-neogi slaves, it might even try to capture other elderly neogi to try to turn them into Great Old Masters, it depends how strong the "Poison Great Old Masters" instinct is.

One of the things I like about these threads is that we *are* The Sages. :D

- jasön

Wakboth

02-17-2009 04:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9987881)

One of the things I like about these threads is that we are The Sages. :D

And what do we end up doing? Arguing about the details of Neogi reproduction. :D

JRM

02-17-2009 05:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9984924)

Nightmare

Tough one this. It isn't a bad monster at all - in fact, it's quite a nice idea, even if the whole concept is basically a ridiculously obvious and banal pun. I kind of like over-the-top evil creatures, and you don't get much more over-the-top evil than the nightmare, with its black fur and red eyes and noxious vapour emissions. You would never come across one and say to yourself, "Hang on, he could be a nice guy, it's difficult to tell." And it's good to have something

big and hard for BBEGs to ride around on.

The problem is that, really, what do you do with the anti-Shadowfax? Shadowfax, no matter how Tolkien tried, was only ever just a horse. And so are nightmares; nasty and tough perhaps, but really just a steed. What can you do with them other than have them be the mount of some vile necromancer or anti-paladin?

I'm quite fond of Nightmares, so they've cropped up quite often in my games, although I confess this has always been as "Steed of the Big Bad Guy". However, thinking it over there is more potential to them than that.

One problem is that although Nightmares can understand other creatures, there's no mention of them being able to reply. If I got in the habit of thinking of nightmares communicating with non-nightmares, maybe I'd have done more with them, since I'd have more impetus to develop a nightmare with personality and plots, making them a bit more than "Evil Snappy Demon Horse to carry villain from A to B". Plus, I like the idea of a talking demon horse.

Going by the Monstrous Manual, nightmares communicate with each other through empathy. The MM says "Nightmares can understand commands from evil riders." Does that mean they can't understand their masters when they're **not** riding, and that they do not understand the commands of good riders? Perhaps their empathy allows them to comprehend the desires of a like-minded (i.e. Evil) creature in close proximity (like riding, grooming etc), but not any other creatures. The sorts of creatures they usually serve as mounts ("baatezu, tanar'ri, night hags, liches" et cetera) mostly have powers that allow them to communicate with any sapient being, but it'd be a bit awkward if a nightmare summoner has to sit on the beast's back or cast *tongues* to be able to ask it anything.

It'd help if the MM gave more motivation for Nightmares than "gleefully serves as a mount for any mission of Evil" and "will work for platinum oat-flakes".

JRM

02-17-2009 05:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

As to what do you do with Nightmares.

As (un)reason has already been pointed out, they could become "powers behind the throne" or be a major transport power of the underworld. They also have close ties with the hags, so might be strong players in those fiendish ladies damned soul acquisition business. ("The Nightmare knows as Eryscephalus hereby agrees to transport the undersigned to any spot on the prime material plane or the Lower Regions for the duration of the undersigned's natural life in return for exclusive rights to the undersigned's intangible perpetual assets")

Speaking about hags, are nightmares always female too? I can't recall any D&D illustrations which show nightstallions. (Yes, I know it'd have been very unlikely for them to dare publish a picture of a male animal's 'dangly bits') Still, maybe all nightmares are literally *mares*, which raises the question of where new nightmares come from. A lot of demons are "promoted" from lesser demons and larvae, maybe nightmares are formed from the damned souls of sapient equines such as Pegasi or Centaurs? That would make them quite rare, since such creatures are mostly good aligned.

Alternatively, nightmares may come in male and female, but are matriarchal - each herd may have a few stallions for breeding purposes, but most males wander about the lower realms by themselves plotting to assassinate and replace a "stud" stallion. (Which could lead to the players getting sucked into such intrigues, e.g. they need a nightstallion's aid and it demands they murder his rival in return.) Regardless of this masculine bickering it's the "circle of old mares" who command the herd, in co-operation with their hag companions.

As for their adventure potential, nightmares can travel almost anywhere on any plane, and are one of easiest monsters with this ability to summon. Maybe the players have to deal with some nightmares to travel to another plane, since they lack the ability to use any other means? This could be especially awkward if the players have to travel to an Outer

Realm that is not one of the infernal ones: "excuse me my good Planetar, we come on an urgent mission for goodness!" "THEN WHY ARE YOU SITTING ON A DEMON-HORSE, MORTAL?" "Erm..."

Perhaps the party are hired to rescue a lost wizard you travelled to the Beastlands on a nightmare, so they have to (a) summon the nightmare and get it to tell them where the wizard went, (b) negotiate with the nightmare for transport to the Beastlands, and then (c) after rescuing the wizard realize they forgot to pre-negotiate a price with the nightmares for carrying them back home. (I have had players do something similar)

Or how about this: the party are hired to break into the manse of a high level Evil Wizard while she's away to substitute her stock of platinum oat flakes with silver-adulterated replicas. Then, when she summons her Nightmare to carry her on an Evil Mission™, the improperly paid nightmare will instead carry her down to the Abyss and abandons her, as is their usual custom. The players should be too low-level to just kill the evil wizard, and their employer gives them enough info they have a good chance of reaching the sorcerer's oats. (Said employer is quite likely to be the wizard's traitorous apprentice, which would explain why they know the tower's defences so well.)

A nightmare could also one-up the old Kelpie trick of luring people to ride it, since instead of just drowning and eating those fools it carries them down to the Abyss. One possibility is various people of dubious morality start disappearing without a trace. The players should be able to figure out they all went out riding, but may not realize they were not actually riding their own horse, but a nightmare wearing a *Hat of Disguise* that it makes appear to be a bridle. The Nightmare is abducting people of evil alignment to Hades where her accomplice, a Night Hag, holds them as slaves.

Oh, and that Gloom Meet makes me think of a swap meet more than a Stock Report of the Damned. It's a neutral ground where lots of minor players get together to trade objects, larvae, information and contracts and the Hags and the Nightmares get a cut of the proceeds. Basically, a lower plane version of a Fairy Market, rather than somewhere archdevils and demon princes get together to agree *The Ten Year Plan for Evil*.

ESkemp

02-17-2009 05:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In an entirely-unrelated-to-D&D game, a player decided that his character's race would have been created by a secretive race of telepathic horses inspired by the Houyhnhnms. Start with "evil plane-traveling fiendish Houyhnhnms," surely something could be devised to give them a culture of their own that passes muster. A slave-race of "grooms," perhaps: maybe some sort of specialized imp thing for doing some of the fiddlier work that requires thumbs. Something kept in corrals that the nomadic nightmares visit on and off. I dunno.

I don't have much of a problem with seeing nightmares as threatening on their own (though they do make perfectly desirable steeds for villains); horses bite, and they're kind of alarming when they go nuts and start bucking and kicking and biting. An angry carnivorous hellfire horse probably will take a nasty chunk out of you, cauterizing the wound as it does so, in addition to raining down those flaming hooves. Their fighting style would probably mean that backstabbing and/or flanking a nightmare are tricky; hooves and bite on one end, more powerful kicks on the other. The real trick is figuring out how to add variety. Infernal steel barding with a long impaling horn on the champron? Sorcerers that have developed a peculiar form of magic with verbal components usable only by the horse's mouthparts? Eight-legged nightmare Sleipnir royalty? Individual breath weapons? There are options.

JasonK

02-17-2009 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 9987930)

And what do we end up doing? Arguing about the details of Neogi reproduction. :D

Exactly!

- jasön

Felix

02-17-2009 07:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9988236)

Speaking about hags, are nightmares always female too? I can't recall any D&D illustrations which show nightstallions. (Yes, I know it'd have been very unlikely for them to dare publish a picture of a male animal's 'dangly bits') Still, maybe all nightmares are literally mares, which raises the question of where new nightmares come from. . . lot of demons are "promoted" from lesser demons and larvae, maybe nightmares are formed from the damned souls of sapient equines such as Pegasi or Centaurs? That would make them quite rare, since such creatures are mostly good aligned.

Nightmares -- who are, as you note, all female -- do not come out in large numbers to spread word of the Gloom Meet. They have a remarkably regular reproductive cycle, and go into estrus once a decade. Then they roam the planes, seeking a mate. What foes of nightmares have misconstrued as hot clouds of deadly noxious vapors are actually powerful pheromones, capable of beguiling any suitable equine. (I say it should beguile unicorns, since I see their description says they're immune to magical charm effects; this is totally physiological. Plus, seducing a unicorn seems more evil than seducing a pegasus.)

Other evil entities use this as a sign that it is time to attend a Gloom Meet. Besides, by the time they've amassed the armies for the wars planned at this meet, they'll have a whole new batch of evil steeds, just the right age for combat.

Mr. Teapot

02-17-2009 07:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9988170)
Plus, I like the idea of a talking demon horse.

Just a little while ago I was thinking that there were strange parallels between Mr. Ed and the Son of Sam (you know, serial killer who was ordered around by a demon possessed dog?).

...In both cases, you have a pet animal that only talks to one person. Though the Mr. Ed sitcom played this for laughs, it sounds a lot like a serious mental illness (see the aforementioned Son of Sam).

So a nightmare seems to be the perfect creature to go in such a role: a PC gets a horse, for some reason (bought, borrowed, stolen or inherited). A very nice black horse, which is surprisingly good in combat. But it starts talking to its rider, and slowly starts tempting them into doing more and more evil acts. Or in allowing crimes to go unpunished, or to be more strict in the tenets of their dogmas. And, of course, no one else can ever hear the horse telling the PC this. He either shuts up when someone else is nearby, or communicates telepathically or something.

If the nightmare drives the hero insane, that's a success. If he turns the hero to great evil, that's also a success. If it eventually becomes clear that he'll never beat the hero, the nightmare can fly away or turn on the PC at a terribly inconvenient time (like in the middle of battle, say).

Which could go anywhere between Mr. Ed and Son of Sam in the tone spectrum. Could be really creepy, or really silly. Or in the hands of the right GM, both.

(un)reason

02-17-2009 07:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Felix (Post 9988683)

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:cool: I like this. It meshes well with Night hags. Invading their dreams and riding their *back*? I think not. Ahh, 2nd ed and it's bowdlerization. :D

randomgamer8466

02-17-2009 10:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I don't have my omniscience on me right now and I'm too lazy to look it up, but I don't think D&D is the first work that integrates the concept of a mare with that of a nightmare (bad dream). I think there is some sort of folktale about a black horse that brings bad dreams.

Squizzle

02-17-2009 10:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9987832)

Well there are plenty of real-world species which die after their first pregnancy, and I can't offhand think of any that can cancel their birth, although some can delay it until conditions are good (e.g. some spiders store sperm until needed to fertilize their eggs, then die after they hatch). There are some animals that can self-abort, including many rodents, but all of the ones I can think of can give birth on more than one occasion.

Although if we consider it another way, your theory could help explain the Great Old Master phenomena. If we assume neogi can 'self-abort', maybe it's not the neogi's eggs/womb/whatever becoming mature that makes them become a "Great Old Master", it's their loss of the self-abort function. i.e. it could be that rather than becoming senile because their eggs have become capable of fertilization, they've become old enough that their self-aborting immune system is starting to fail and they cannot stop their eggs being fertilized. That implies a 'rogue' neogi may just be one who has an unusually healthy old age.

In any case, their reproductive biology may mean that wealthy neogi could be extremely keen to acquire age-reduction magic. If you knew your allies would see to it you exploded into two dozen babies after you age a couple of years, how much would you be willing to spend on a potion of youth?

Thinking along the lines of neogi spontaneous abortion today, I considered that it was likely a function of their immune system, so reavers could possibly just be those, as you say, with unusually healthy immune systems. Further, I was wondering what sort of wrinkle it'd add if neogi were only able to inseminate others after they themselves had been inseminated--early in the pregnancy, before they became full-on Great Old Master-sized monsters, or perhaps after they became pregnant, but with the possibility of a termination if they impregnated another fast enough (passing the buck, as it were). What implications could this have for neogi behavior, society, etc.?

Kakita Kojiro

02-17-2009 11:15 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by randomgamer8466 (Post 9989208)

I don't have my omniscience on me right now and I'm too lazy to look it up, but I don't think D&D is the first work that integrates the concept of a mare with that of a nightmare (bad dream). I think there is some sort of folktale about a black horse that brings bad dreams.

That would be the [mara](#) -- cognate of "mare" and the source of "nightmare" in English. The folklore of a nightmare being a black horse is... the folklore source of "nightmare".

What is interesting, though, is that being "mare-ridden" is the same thing as being "hag-ridden", and a "nightmare" and an "incubus dream" are the same thing as well. D&D derived two (and a part) different monsters out of these, and kept the hag - nightmare connection... but the poor incubus was relegated to occasional, halfhearted mentions as a succubus in male-form, or a male-succubus version in Dragon magazine or whatnot.

JRM

02-17-2009 08:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 9988728)

Just a little while ago I was thinking that there wee strange parallels between Mr. Ed and the Son of Sam (you know, serial killer who was ordered around by a demon possessed dog?).

...In both cases, you have a pet animal that only talks to one person. Though the Mr. Ed sitcom played this for laughs, it sounds a lot like a serious mental illness (see the aforementioned Son of Sam).

So a nightmare seems to be the perfect creature to go in such a role: a PC gets a horse, for some reason (bought, borrowed, stolen or inherited). A very nice black horse, which is surprisingly good in combat. But it starts talking to its rider, and slowly starts tempting them into doing more and more evil acts. Or in allowing crimes to go unpunished, or to be more strict in the tenets of their dogmas. And, of course, no one else can ever hear the horse telling the PC this. He either shuts up when someone else is nearby, or communicates telepathically or something.

If the nightmare drives the hero insane, that's a success. If he turns the hero to great evil, that's also a success. If it eventually becomes clear that he'll never beat the hero, the nightmare can fly away or turn on the PC at a terribly inconvenient time (like in the middle of battle, say).

Which could go anywhere between Mr. Ed and Son of Sam in the tone spectrum. Could be really creepy, or really silly. Or in the hands of the right GM, both.

Good ideas. I had a similar notion that nightmares serve evil masters in order to corrupt them further, all part of their role in the larvae creation/transport business. Just like imps & quasits seek to do while in "service" to their "masters".

Kevin Rohan

02-17-2009 08:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I have to say, out of all the critters on the list, the Hobgobo is my favorite. I've always loved using them as NPCs and enemies...they are, in my opinion, one of the only Goblinoids capable of keeping up with PC races on a one-to-one basis.

JRM

02-17-2009 08:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Felix (Post 9988683)

Nightmares -- who are, as you note, all female -- do not come out in large numbers to spread word of the Gloom Meet. They have a remarkably regular reproductive cycle, and go into estrus once a decade. Then they roam the planes, seeking a mate. What foes of nightmares have misconstrued as hot clouds of deadly noxious vapors are actually powerful pheromones, capable of beguiling any suitable equine. (I say it should beguile unicorns, since I see their description says they're immune to magical charm effects; this is totally physiological. Plus, seducing a unicorn seems more evil than seducing a pegasus.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9989385)

What is interesting, though, is that being "mare-ridden" is the same thing as being "hag-ridden", and a "nightmare" and an "incubus dream" are the same thing as well. D&D derived two (and a part) different monsters out of these, and kept the hag - nightmare connection... but the poor incubus was relegated to occasional, halfhearted mentions as a succubus in male-form, or a male-succubus version in Dragon magazine or whatnot.

Just had an idea, maybe we've been thinking about this all wrong. Perhaps nightmares are really male, and nightmares and incubi are the same breed of demon - the male counterpart to the night hag.
(Which implies an incubus could literally be described as hung like a horse:p)

No wonder night hags are so often found in the company of nightmares - that's no mere steed, that's her mate.

Alternatively, nightmares/hags could be able to change sex like the traditional incubus/succubus does - in medieval/renaissance folklore these demons just form a body with a gender appropriate to their lover/victim. A nightmare/hag may just spend most of its time in female form, only needing to become male when it intends to perpetuate its kind.

So, the proposed nightmares/hags could reproduce by mating with each other, or perhaps when a nightmare/incubus "visits" a mortal (humanoid or sapient equine), it occasionally results in a fiendish offspring. The female ones look perfectly normal until they reach maturity, whereupon they become night hags or (female) nightmares. The male ones could be monstrous abominations from birth (hooves, horns, gravestone-like teeth, et cetera).

The Last Conformist

02-17-2009 09:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 9989385)

That would be the mara -- cognate of "mare" and the source of "nightmare" in English.

For clarity, *mara* is cognate with the "mare" in "nightmare", but not with "mare" = female horse.

Wakshaani

02-17-2009 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Bad Horse, Bad Horse

Bad Horse, Bad Horse

He rides across the nation, the thoroughbred of sin

He got the application that you just sent in

It needs evaluation, so let the games begin

A heinous crime, a show of force

(a murder would be nice of course)

Bad Horse, Bad Horse
Bad Horse, he's bad
The evil league of evil is watching so beware
The grade that you receive'll be your last, we swear
So make the bad horse gleeful, or he'll make you his mare
You're saddled up; there's no recourse
It's "hi-yo, silver!"

Signed: Bad Horse.

EmperorSeth

02-18-2009 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

In retrospect, I'm amazed that took as long as it did.

Belchion

02-18-2009 02:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9988236)

A nightmare could also one-up the old Kelpie trick of luring people to ride it, since instead of just drowning and eating those fools it carries them down to the Abyss. [...] The Nightmare is abducting people of evil alignment to Hades where her accomplice, a Night Hag, holds them as slaves.

Why only evil aligned people? They simply gather whom they can, put them somewhere on a lower plane where there is nothing too eat and only horrible water to drink and then visit their victims again and again, offering to bring them back home for just one small deed in return (which, of course, is an Act of Ultimate Evil...)

JRM

02-18-2009 04:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 9992046)

Why only evil aligned people? They simply gather whom they can, put them somewhere on a lower plane where there is nothing too eat and only horrible water to drink and then visit their victims again and again, offering to bring them back home for just one small deed in return (which, of course, is an Act of Ultimate Evil...)

I thought of that option but decided against it, partly because some might find the idea of the nightmares kidnapping perfectly innocent people a bit squiffy but mainly because I suspect that if nightmares tried that

ploy a Planetary or an exultance of Devas would turn up and squish the nightmare flat for abducting souls it had no claim to.

Matthew L. Martin

02-18-2009 12:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Felix (Post 9988683)
Plus, seducing a unicorn seems more evil than seducing a pegasus.)

The *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendix III* used this core concept (evil nightmare flatters and seduces unicorn) as the species origin for the 'shadow unicorn'.

noisms

02-18-2009 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Nymph

The Nymph is another variation on the very-beautiful-temptress monster theme, but seems slightly less interesting than a Dryad or Sylph - Nymphs don't pose a threat as they can't seduce a character and spirit them away, and their abilities are kind of dull. They know the hidden secrets of the region they inhabit, their hair and bathing pools give Charisma bonuses, and their kiss can make a person forget painful memories for a day... but none of this seems *particularly* interesting or worth having.

Probably Nymphs are supposed to be used as one of those helpful creatures who can heal characters and drop hints about the plot. It's not really my style as a DM to use that sort of monster, but horses for courses, blah blah. I suppose I can see the value in a 'sanctuary' area held by a Nymph, where recuperation and rest can take place for the PCs. A little like Lothlorien was for the Fellowship of the Ring.

Alternatively, I quite like the idea of a Nymph sending a party off on wild goose chases in the name of 'good', when really it's all in the name of personal advancement or revenge for her.

JasonK

02-18-2009 04:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Nymphs, in my book, are scary with a capital SCARY. You so much as look at one, you go blind; you look at one while it's naked (and, let's face it, beautiful woodland Grecian thing that one is, when is a nymph *not* naked) and you DIE. That's fucking scary!

But nymphs are fundamentally good creatures. They don't strip down with the intention to kill; they're naked because that's who they are. I think they're like children, in that respect - they're innocents, forever unable to see ugliness, never realizing that people hide their nakedness. I think they literally lack the ability to realize that they harm people who see them; it's not quite something that registers. Nymphs who do realize it, they're no longer nymphs - just like the knowledge that she was growing older ultimately ruined Wendy for Neverland, so too does knowledge of ugliness ruin a nymph's beauty. At that point they stop being nymphs and they're thereafter only dryads or elves or something,

still beautiful, but now capable of the depths of grief.

All of which makes them incredibly tragic to my mind. Here you have, a priori, by definition, the greatest physical beauty the world can ever know, but no one can see it and live. Maybe that's ok - maybe there's just no point in living after you've seen something that transcendentally perfect, like getting a little glimpse of the divine - but maybe this is the saddest commentary on the state of the world possible; that true beauty can only exist in ignorance, that the aware can never glimpse true beauty.

That's my take on it, anyway, which is why I'm glad for the existence of the nymph as such in D&D. How to use any of that in an adventure, though, is something else altogether, and a question I've no clue how to answer.

- Jason

Wakboth

02-18-2009 06:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I agree with Jason that nymphs are a great idea, but kind of difficult to use in an actual game. (Also, your take of the nymph and innocence is pretty poignant.)

Also, the DiTerlizzi illustration is beautiful. IIRC, the original one had the nymph entirely naked, though tastefully covered, but TSR editors didn't like that. So he drew that shift on her.

Quasar

02-18-2009 06:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 9988170)

It'd help if the MM gave more motivation for Nightmares than "gleefully serves as a mount for any mission of Evil" and "will work for platinum oat-flakes".

That's probably why we just gave a famous re-occurring nightmare in our game Mr Ed's personality. Well if Mr Ed was pure evil.

The Last Conformist

02-18-2009 06:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

So beautiful that a glimpse can blind or even kill a man, the nymphs are the embodiment of loveliness, a triumph of nature.

If you cross a nymph and a medusa, do you get someone so ordinary-looking that a single glimpse can kill?

YojimboC

02-18-2009 09:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Nymphs. Yeah, I dunno. They make me think of dragonflies.

But I guess that could tie into Jason's idea... that nymphs are immature dryads or some other nature spirit. That could be interesting. But again, no real use for them in a game; I mean, I've got a million other ways to do plot exposition.

Wakshaani

02-19-2009 12:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JasonK (Post 9995067)

All of which makes them incredibly tragic to my mind. Here you have, a priori, by definition, the greatest physical beauty the world can ever know, but no one can see it and live. Maybe that's ok - maybe there's just no point in living after you've seen something that transcendently perfect, like getting a little glimpse of the divine - but maybe this is the saddest commentary on the state of the world possible; that true beauty can only exist in ignorance, that the aware can never glimpse true beauty.

rolls saving throw

"Meh. not my type."

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Octopus, Giant

No prizes for guessing what this creature looks like.

Giant Octopus (I refuse to use the word Octopii!) are tough marine monsters who can camouflage themselves through colour change. I like the idea, being a bit of an Octopus fan, but I think the designers got rather carried away with emulating the combat abilities of an eight-tentacled monster; see how easy this is to digest:

Quote:

A giant octopus generally attacks with six of its eight tentacles, using two to anchor itself. Each striking tentacle causes 1d4 points of damage, but unless the member is loosened or severed, it constricts for 2d4 points of damage every round after striking. If a victim is dragged close enough to the beak, the monster can bite for 2d6 points of damage.

Any victim under 8 feet tall or long can be struck by only one tentacle at a time, and the chance that both upper limbs are pinned on a successful strike is 25%, while the chance that both upper limbs are free is also 25%. When both upper limbs are held, the victim has no attack; if only one limb is held the victim attacks with a -3 penalty to its attack roll; if both limbs are free (i.e., the tentacle is wrapped around the victim's body) then the victim attacks with a -1 penalty to its attack roll. Tentacles grip with a Strength of 18/20. Any creature with a Strength equal to or greater than 18/20 can grasp the tentacle and negate its constriction. This does not free the victim, and the octopus will immediately seek to drag the victim to its mouth to eat it. To break free, a tentacle must be severed; this requires 8 points of damage. (These hit points are in addition to those the octopus gains from its 8 Hit Dice.)

There is also rather a lot of the exception-based design we know and love in the entry: Giant Octopus have a '90% chance' of fleeing if they lose three or more tentacles; adventurers only have a '10% chance' of spotting them, etc. etc. And hey, isn't a cuttlefish a squid? But I can forgive these flaws because, well, I do like a good Octopus.

Possible uses in a game? Giant Octopus ink is used for writing magic scrolls. Their hide can also be made into rain ponchos (I'm not making that up): is this the single weirdest and most obscure example of monster-corpse use in the entire MM?

Kakita Kojiro

02-19-2009 09:53 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9998787)
(I refuse to use the word Octopii!)

HUZZAH! all that quibbling over pluralization finally paid off.

demiurge1138

02-19-2009 12:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 9998787)
Giant Octopus (I refuse to use the word Octopii!)

Good on you! The properly Greek plural would be "octopodes", but "octopuses" is also correct for English. "Octopi" is a bad mishmash of Latin and Greek, and we know what a problem that is (just ask "television").

Wakboth

02-19-2009 06:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What I noticed about the Giant Octopus entry was that it definitely wasn't written by the PETA Girl! All that talk about how giant octopuses are sneaky, vicious, evil, man-eating critters who snatch unsuspecting sailors for midnight snack, or team up to capsizes ships, may not be realistic but it sets up a lot of good encounter ideas.

DMH

02-19-2009 06:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Pendant- They don't have tentacles, they have arms. Squid have arms and tentacles. And they should have a chance to damage armor- the beak is meant to crack arthropod exoskeletons.

Quote:

And hey, isn't a cuttlefish a squid?

Cuttlefish are cuttlefish. Cuttlefish, squid, octopuses and vampire squid are orders within the cephalopods.

EmperorSeth

02-19-2009 11:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What I don't get is their alignment. For one thing, it's neutral (evil.) Why the parentheses? What's the difference between this and just neutral evil. I suppose it could be just "neutral with evil tendencies," but why not just say that?

More importantly, why and how are they evil? They only have animal intelligence, and they don't do anything that other Neutral Hungry monsters don't already do. What's the point?

Sleeper

02-20-2009 02:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10000956)

What I don't get is their alignment. For one thing, it's neutral (evil.) Why the parentheses? What's the difference between this and just neutral evil. I suppose it could be just "neutral with evil tendencies," but why not just say that?

More importantly, why and how are they evil? They only have animal intelligence, and they don't do anything that other Neutral Hungry monsters don't already do. What's the point?

Original sin. Most natural creatures are just that, natural. Red in tooth and claw perhaps, but in tune with the cycles of the earth and moon, the prey and the predator. A hippo might chomp the arm off an elf who scraped across its back with a canoe, but that's its nature; it's just irritable. They exist in a preformed state, in a perfect Hobbesian world. They just are. But the weft is not always unwarpd.

There's something about human flesh. The wendigo, the human turned cannibal turned monster, is not simply an isolated humanoid aberration. There's something *wrong* with humans. Some say the mind has poisoned the meat; others say in a world of chimaeras, the worst is a weak and unift naked bipedal ape with strange grasping hands and a giant head, that twists and turns branches and stones into teeth and claws and uses them for murder and sport. Before humans, there was no wendigo, vampire, or ghoul.

All we know is that when an animal has tasted the human flesh and goes back for more, it *changes*. They become hungry avavisms, like the beast of Gévaudan. They grow, and deform. Giant bemaned lions like ghosts and shadows in the darkness; the cackle of the priapic hyena excited by the kill. They experience unnatural and malignant drives, like a fever or disease.

The octopus grows, becomes large. Arms become tentacles, twisting and serrated. Eyes become beady, and the mind inside moves away from the eternal present of the infant and begins to think, to plot. They hunger in their bonelessness for cracking ships, and lust after the choice morsels inside. The gobbling behemoth in wait deep under the seaway's brine is already half-kraken, and no longer a true child of nature.

Littleredfox

02-20-2009 09:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10000181)

vampire squid

Lead to the thought of undead squid in black satin cloaks.

Presumably ex Arboreal squid who've had a run in with with Straad.

Kaiten

02-20-2009 09:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10001740)

Original sin. Most natural creatures are just that, natural. Red in tooth and claw perhaps, but in tune with the cycles of the earth and moon, the prey and the predator. A hippo might chomp the arm off an elf who scraped across its back with a canoe, but that's its nature; it's just irritable. They exist in a preformed state, in a perfect Hobbesian world. They just are. But the weft is not always unwarped.

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The octopus grows, becomes large. Arms become tentades, twisting and serrated. Eyes become beady, and the mind inside moves away from the eternal present of the infant and begins to think, to plot. They hunger in their bonelessness for cracking ships, and lust after the choice morsels inside. The gobbling behemoth in wait deep under the seaway's brine is already half-kraken, and no longer a true child of nature.

Woah, that's almost Lovecraftian there. I suddenly yearn to use a giant octupus in my game.

Mr. Teapot

02-20-2009 09:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Littleredfox (Post 10003497)

Lead to the thought of undead squid in black satin cloaks.

Funny, just the other day I was reading [commentary concerning how easy it is](#) to make a vampire squid from hell in 3rd ed D&D, but how it wouldn't resemble [the real thing](#) much at all. But I might use that Wikipedia picture to show my players [what an Infernal Vampiric Cephalopod](#) would look like.

noisms

02-20-2009 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ogre

Funny how the MM does this to you. You're just merrily trundling through obscure monster after obscure monster, thinking to yourself, "Wow, I don't even *remember* this" when suddenly TADAH! up pops an entry like Elf or Goblin or Dragon to drag you back to the land of the living. In this case, it's the Ogre.

Let's get this over with straight away: Ogres, in all their three incarnations, are one of my all-time D&D favourites. Maybe not top 10, but top 20 for sure. And I think the reason why I like them is that they are so similar to humans. Really, they are just a big version of us, but without any of the redeeming qualities - like creativity or love. They are our worst side, writ large. They don't have to have green skin or point ears or wings; they're just destructive, greedy and cruel.

I've often thought about creating a campaign setting in which the only non-humans are all proper monsters - i.e. no orcs, gnolls, hobgoblins, elves and the like - just Monsters with a capital 'M'. Ogres, along with Giants, would be the only really humanoid creatures, and would be an almost elemental force, roaming around the outskirts of human society and just wrecking stuff. A little like the Angrborn in Gene Wolfe's *The Wizard Knight*: brutish embodiments of everything bad about humanity.

Ogre Magi

I never understood why, in 3rd edition, they....well....made the Ogre Mage *crap*. Because really, they're a very evocative and interesting monster in 2nd edition; I love the pseudo-Asian feel to the flavour text and art. Was it because the 3rd edition crowd thought that the 2nd edition version was in some way offensive? Anyway, I've always felt that Ogre Magi have great untapped potential as a major city-building, civilized race. I actually rather like the idea of them as a Persian-style culture, perhaps like old Khwarezm: vastly wealthy and knowledgeable and slightly debauched, growing fat on sherbets and serviced by slaves, but mighty in magic.

Merrow

Merrow are - little known fact - based on a mythical Gaelic creature of a similar name. In the old stories, though, they basically appear as Mermen and Mermaids, so I'm not sure how, in D&D, they warped into aquatic Ogres. I'll not complain though: aquatic Ogres is a good concept. Sadly, like many of the sea creatures in MM, you have to feel that they could never have legs in a campaign - because how often do characters in a campaign go underwater?

kami2awa

02-20-2009 08:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10005123)

Merrow

Merrow are - little known fact - based on a mythical Gaelic creature of a similar name. In the old stories, though, they basically appear as Mermen and Mermaids, so I'm not sure how, in D&D, they warped into aquatic Ogres. I'll not complain though: aquatic Ogres is a good concept. Sadly, like many of the sea creatures in MM, you have to feel that they could never have legs in a campaign - because how often do characters in a campaign go underwater?

Actually, I think they are one of the easier-to-use aquatic monsters. Don't have the book with me right now, so I can't remember their exact habitat (fresh or salt water), but potentially they could inhabit rivers and lakes, prey on ships and coastal towns, and of course jump out from under bridges in a fairytale manner.

A question about the ogre mage illustration, which I've wondered about since I first read the book; what does he have on his back? It looks like two very thoroughly bound human captives, which struck me as a rather horrible situation to be stuck in...

JRM

02-20-2009 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10000181)

Pendant- They don't have tentacles, they have arms. Squid have arms and tentacles. And they should have a chance to damage armor- the beak is meant to crack arthropod exoskeletons.

Well while people with an interest in biology will make that distinction, I suspect a common English speaker would use arms/tentacles interchangeably for an Octopuses' limbs, and have no objection to that.

Although we should really be calling them legs anyway, since that's what "pus" means, they're not called Octobrachs after all. I'm guessing that's the correct plural for brach (Greek "arm").

Now that gives me an idea for a monster...

JRM

02-20-2009 08:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10000956)

What I don't get is their alignment. For one thing, it's neutral (evil.) Why the parentheses? What's the difference between this and just neutral evil. I suppose it could be just "neutral with evil tendencies," but why not just say that?

More importantly, why and how are they evil? They only have animal intelligence, and they don't do anything that other Neutral Hungry monsters don't already do. What's the point?

My assumption was that Giant Octopodes are tainted with malevolence giving them an instinct for cruelty, maybe due to interbreeding with demons in the dawn of time. If they were Neutral Evil they'd be consciously and actively seeking to perform Evil, for their own pleasure and to serve the Cause of the lower planes.

Or maybe Giant Octopuses **used** to be sapient, Exceptionally-intelligent worshippers of Demogorgon and other fiends. They performed great offenses against the Gods and Nature, resulting them in being cursed down to the level of beasts, but they still retain lingering traces of their old knowledge and preference for Evil.

noisms

02-20-2009 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10005365)

My assumption was that Giant Octopodes are tainted with malevolence giving them an instinct for cruelty, maybe due to interbreeding with demons in the dawn of time. If they were Neutral Evil they'd be consciously and actively seeking to perform Evil, for their own pleasure and to serve the Cause of the lower planes.

*Or maybe Giant Octopuses **used** to be sapient, Exceptionally-intelligent worshippers of Demogorgon and other fiends. They performed great offenses against the Gods and Nature, resulting them in being cursed down to the level of beasts, but they still retain lingering traces of their old knowledge and preference for Evil.*

I like it. A big part of what's entertaining about this thread is the histories that people have been giving the various monsters.

One thing I should have mentioned about the Giant Octopus is that it ought really to have higher than 'animal' intelligence, given what we know about cephalopod brains. I mean, if PETA girl got away with giving Dolphins an intelligence of 11-12, then Giant Octopus at least deserve a semi or a low!

JRM

02-20-2009 10:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10005123)

Ogre

*I've often thought about creating a campaign setting in which the only non-humans are all proper monsters - i.e. no orcs, gnolls, hobgoblins, elves and the like - just Monsters with a capital 'M'. Ogres, along with Giants, would be the only really humanoid creatures, and would be an almost elemental force, roaming around the outskirts of human society and just wrecking stuff. A little like the Angrborn in Gene Wolfe's *The Wizard Knight*: brutish embodiments of everything bad about humanity.*

That'd work, and I've heard similar notions elsewhere. Would you have had different monsters be the personification of other forms of evil? If ogres are brutal violence in the flesh, are Beholder the incarnation of Tyranny, et cetera.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10005123)

I never understood why, in 3rd edition, they....well....made the Ogre Mage crap. Because really, they're a very evocative and interesting monster in 2nd edition; I love the pseudo-Asian feel to the flavour text and art. Was it because the 3rd edition crowd thought that the 2nd edition version was in some way offensive? Anyway, I've always felt that Ogre Magi have great untapped potential as a major city-building, civilized race. I actually rather like the idea of them as a Persian-style culture, perhaps like old Khwarezm: vastly wealthy and knowledgeable and slightly debauched, growing fat on sherbets and serviced by slaves, but mighty in magic.

There isn't anything in 3rd editions SRD that prevents pseudo-Asian Ogre Magi, I have a bigger problem with the way that the 3rd edition spells work mean that an Ogre Magi is a much less effective mage than it should be for the level of adventurers its CR suggests it should face.

The Last Conformist

02-20-2009 10:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10005335)

Well while people with an interest in biology will make that distinction, I suspect a common English speaker would use arms/tentacles interchangeably for an Octopuses' limbs, and have no objection to that.

The annoying part is that by the general definition of "tentacle" usually given in invertebrate zoology, cephalopod arms *are* tentacles.

See eg. Maggenti's *Online Dictionary of Invertebrate Zoology*:

tentacle n. [L. tentaculum, feeler] Any elongate flexible appendage usually near the mouth.

Just for fun, see also the entry for "arm":

arm n. [...] [4]b. The tentacles of an octopod.

Thus, saying that people interested in biology *will* make the distinction is much too strong. They *may* make it, particularly if they're cephalopod specialists or talking specifically about the different kinds of appendages in squid, but they often don't.

Wakboth

02-20-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Has anyone noticed how little the ogres weigh for their height? 9' 6" and 325 lbs ends you up with a BMI of 17,6, which is clearly underweight. (Cheating a little, I checked the next entry, for half-ogres: they stand 7 to 8 feet tall, and weigh 315 to 425 lbs.) Someone has goofed here!

Contrary to what the ecology section says, I always thought that ogres, perhaps as the reflection of the bad side of humanity, were the humanoid monsters that were easiest to get along. Sure, they're cruel and greedy and brutal, but they're also dumb and lazy. A human village and an ogre tribe can exist surprisingly close to one another, as long as the humans are willing to accept the occasional loss of sheep or cows, and are ready to thwack the ogres every now and then, as a reminder for them to keep to their side of the forest.

DMH

02-20-2009 10:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I never cared that much for ogre magi because I used dao or marids with that personality/niche.

Merrow are useful because they are like sahuagen and can walk on land for hours before retreating to the water. The best way to force the PCs to an aquatic campaign is to have either steal something from them and take it home.

JRM

02-20-2009 11:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10005488)

I like it. A big part of what's entertaining about this thread is the histories that people have been giving the various monsters.

One thing I should have mentioned about the Giant Octopus is that it ought really to have higher than 'animal' intelligence, given what we know about cephalopod brains. I mean, if PETA girl got away with giving Dolphins an intelligence of 11-12, then Giant Octopus at least deserve a semi or a low!

I have a half-memory that the 1st edition AD&D Monster Manual gave giant octopuses a higher int score (Semi-intelligent?), but it may just be wishful thinking.

JRM

02-20-2009 11:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10005818)

The annoying part is that by the general definition of "tentacle" usually given in invertebrate zoology, cephalopod arms are tentacles.

See eg. Maggenti's Online Dictionary of Invertebrate Zoology:

tentacle *n.* [*L. tentaculum, feeler*] *Any elongate flexible appendage usually near the mouth.*

Just for fun, see also the entry for "arm":

arm *n.* [...] [4] *b. The tentacles of an octopod.*

Thus, saying that people interested in biology will make the distinction is much too strong. They may make it, particularly if they're cephalopod specialists or talking specifically about the different kinds of appendages in squid, but they often don't.

No disagreement there, I started putting in some caveats when I was drafting the post but they ended up looking clumsy so ended up dropping them for a simple but exaggerated form. something like "It's mainly only those with an interest in marine biology who will be likely to make a fuss over the distinction between octopus arms and squid tentacles" is possibly more accurate.

I also thought about mentioning the word tentacle is derived from Latin for a "feeler", since most squids use their tentacles to shoot out and grasp prey more than to feel around for things.

JRM

02-20-2009 11:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10005829)

Has anyone noticed how little the ogres weigh for their height? 9' 6" and 325 lbs ends you up with a BMI of 17,6, which is clearly underweight. (Cheating a little, I checked the next entry, for half-ogres: they stand 7 to 8 feet tall, and weigh 315 to 425 lbs.) Someone has goofed here!

Oh yes, I noticed that to. Indeed, many of AD&D's oversized humanoids have wildly inappropriate weights. Didn't we cover that in the Giant discussion?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10005829)

Contrary to what the ecology section says, I always thought that ogres, perhaps as the reflection of the bad side of humanity, were the humanoid monsters that were easiest to get along. Sure, they're cruel and greedy and brutal, but they're also dumb and lazy. A human village and an ogre tribe can exist surprisingly close to one another, as long as the humans are willing to accept the occasional loss of sheep or cows, and are ready to thwack the ogres every now and then, as a reminder for them to keep to their side of the forest.

I would think it would be more practical to go the goblinoid route of the humans integrating the ogres into their community rather than letting the tribe "stay on their side of the forest". That way, they can constantly keep an eye on the Ogres to crackdown on any stupid/hostile plans they develop, teach them how to be more productive/cooperative citizens (as much as that's possible), use their strength to do heavy lifting, have them at hand to send in first against the enemy if they're attacked, and get them drunk/give them drugged food and slit all their throats in their sleep if they decide they don't want having these ogres around.

YojimboC

02-20-2009 11:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I liked that there were no orcs in Dragonlance; the ogres filled the niche of the "primary humanoid antagonist" in that setting, and helped differentiate it (a tad) from Tolkien and D&D's Tolkien heavy material.

Generally, I like ogres myself. I use them a lot. In the old days, before we started giving monsters class levels and such, throwing ogres at a party was the only way to get a mid-level group worried about humanoids (well, giant humanoids).

They are one of the great iconic monsters of D&D, albeit not one of the flashier ones. They're basically big cavemen with clubs. Nasty brutes, high strength and decent HPs, but they do tend to go down pretty easily.

Felix

02-21-2009 10:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10005829)

Has anyone noticed how little the ogres weigh for their height? 9' 6" and 325 lbs ends you up with a BMI of 17,6, which is clearly underweight. (Cheating a little, I checked the next entry, for half-ogres: they stand 7 to 8 feet tall, and weigh 315 to 425 lbs.) Someone has goofed here!

In the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Mr. Hyde is actually smaller than Jekyll, because he lacks any good nature, so is literally less of a man. Clearly, ogres are more evil than half-ogres, so much lighter.

If this theory is true, we just need to figure out what creature ogres would be if they were re-united with their good half, and how they got separated in the first place...

JRM

02-21-2009 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Felix (Post 10008431)

In the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Mr. Hyde is actually smaller than Jekyll, because he lacks any good nature, so is literally less of a man. Clearly, ogres are more evil than half-ogres, so much lighter.

If this theory is true, we just need to figure out what creature ogres would be if they were re-united with their good half, and how they got separated in the first place...

Hmm, maybe if Jekyll-Ogres are three to four times heavier than the human they split from, their Hyde counterparts are three to four times *lighter*, therefore an Ogre's opposite alignment twin is ... a brownie!;)

YojimboC

02-23-2009 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion? I can't think of anything cool to say about them either, but I feel like there's some massive amount of untapped potential for something wicked cool here.

I hope we don't fizzle out like this when we get to orcs.

Inyssius

02-23-2009 12:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10015339)

What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion? I can't think of anything cool to say about them either, but I feel like there's some massive amount of untapped potential for something wicked cool here.

I hope we don't fizzle out like this when we get to orcs.

Well, we got a ton of discussion out of giants earlier. They share a lot of the same conceptual space; ogres are basically just adolescent hill giant jocks.

And then there are trolls, which claim the real "primal, slightly unnatural fairy-tale savagery" space in my mind.

Aside from what we've already gone over, the only really good thing you get out of normal ogres is their propensity to spawn more interesting overlords. You've got ogre-magi, of course; but then you also have 4E's [four varieties of oni](#), not to mention 3.5's [ken-kuni](#), [ken-li](#), and [ken-sun](#) (they're in Monster Manual V, and they are *dynamite*--as are a lot of things from that excellent book, in fact).

Inyssius

02-23-2009 12:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10005123)

Ogre Magi

I never understood why, in 3rd edition, they....well....made the Ogre Mage crap. Because really, they're a very evocative and interesting monster in 2nd edition; I love the pseudo-Asian feel to the flavour text and art. Was it because the 3rd edition crowd thought that the 2nd edition version was in some way offensive?

Apparently, they simply didn't think about it. [As Dave Noonan \(now fired, damnit\) said](#),

Quote:

How about a monster with the following spell-like abilities: charm person, cone of cold, darkness, invisibility, gaseous form, polymorph, and sleep. See the theme there? See how the monster's magic powers let it tap into a cool mythological root or enable an interesting encounter?

Me neither.

This monster has two separate abilities (darkness and invisibility) that both effectively turn the encounter into a game of Battleship. "Is the monster in square A-4? You sank my monster!" And it has gaseous form, because apparently it needs a third getaway ability. The monster has sleep, but the creature will never be used against PCs with 4 Hit Dice or less. And polymorph? Don't get me started on polymorph.

Does this monster sound even more random when I tell you it's a flying giant with spell resistance and regeneration

This is a real monster: The orge mage. Why is it this way? **Because when we redesigned monsters for the 3.0 edition of the game in 2000, we opted for a more literal, almost line-by-line translation of the 2nd edition monsters. As a result, the ogre mage is a bit of a proud nail. It's a CR 8 monster with a 9d6 area attack and only 37 hit points. If we wanted intelligent, rapacious, cruel magic-using giants, we could have done better by retaining the concept, not retaining the specific abilities.**

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10015339)

What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion? I can't think of anything cool to say about them either, but I feel like there's some massive amount of untapped potential for something wicked cool here.

I hope we don't fizzle out like this when we get to orcs.

The iconic monsters are tough. What hasn't been done with elves, dwarves, goblins, kobolds, ogres and orcs?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Ooze/Slime/Jelly

I'll do all of these in one go, because...well, you know. You have to hand it to the designers, though - they really do take a genuine shot at making the oozes interesting: "The oozes, slimes and jellies of the underworld are hideous, amorphous creatures that are the bane of all that lives, dissolving the weapons, armor, and flesh of their victims." Ooooooh!

One thing I do rather like about the oozes, slimes and jellies is that they are both mindless and relentless - like zombies or Aliens or the Borg. I wonder if you could base a campaign around that - Olive Slimes gradually spreading their tendrils across an entire continent. A genuine possibility for post-apocalyptic fantasy, in fact: A thousand years after the Olive Slime plague destroyed the land of Blah, the first explorers from Soandso country come ashore....

Ochre Jelly

This is basically a big amoeba which you can blast into several smaller amoebas (amoebae?) and which roams the dungeon looking for people to eat. It is "sometimes tolerated...for its janitorial services".

Grey Ooze

A pretty boring ooze-equivalent to the rust monster, which can dissolve metal. Enlivened by the idea of skilled metal-workers using tiny grey oozes to etch inscriptions into armour, weapons or jewellery.

Crystal Ooze

This is a water-bound equivalent of the grey ooze, which attacks leather, wood and other organic materials rather than metals.

Gelatinous Cube

Ah, the Katamari Roller of D&D. There isn't a whole lot more to say about it than that, though....

Green Slime

This is probably the nastiest of the oozes/slimes/jellies: it grows uncontrollably and kills within 1-4 rounds without

hope of resurrection.

Olive Slime

This parasitic creature attaches itself to your spinal column and gradually takes you over until you become an Olive Slime Creature - essentially a zombie. A little like a D&D version of a Body Snatcher, maybe. They are telepathically linked to their host, and go around attacking other living beings in order to spread the slime disease. Probably the most usable and interesting of the various oozes.

Mustard Jelly

This breed was created when a young wizardress tried to polymorph herself into an Ochre Jelly and something went wrong. Why she wanted to do that anyway is left unsaid. It can emit noxious lethargy-inducing vapours and split itself into segments to attack.

Stunjelly

This is essentially a Gelatinous Cube which can paralyse victims and slowly digest them. Nasty way to go.

Äkräs

02-23-2009 07:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)
Ochre Jelly

I have a soft spot for ochre jellies since they featured in my first contact with RPGs: my cousin was holding a 1st ed session for some of his friends and they fought an ochre jelly. I was an onlooker for a while since we were visiting them at the time.

Quote:

Gelatinous Cube

Ah, the Katamari Roller of D&D. There isn't a whole lot more to say about it than that, though....

Except that it was originally designed by Old Geezer, if I remember correctly.

DMH

02-23-2009 07:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)
A genuine possibility for post-apocalyptic fantasy, in fact: A thousand years after the Olive Slime plague destroyed

the land of Blah, the first explorers from Soandso country come ashore....

And find something like the Sea of Corruption in Nausicaa or the flying version I did in the Mutant Future critters thread.

Oozes can be fun and I find them much more effective than zombies and other undead. The only one I don't care for is green slime- too lethal and it can't move (something I find very odd for a cave roof dwelling monster).

You missed the slithering tracker.

Wakboth

02-23-2009 08:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10015339)

What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion? I can't think of anything cool to say about them either, but I feel like there's some massive amount of untapped potential for something wicked cool here.

I think the problem is that the ogre is a pretty pedestrian monster. It's big, dumb, ugly and strong. They're not as big as giants, as ravenous and monstrous as trolls, not as smart as goblinoids, not as flexible as humans, not as iconic as orcs...

Anyway, did we jump over the half-ogre entirely? They're more interesting than the purely brutish ogres, but they've never (to my knowledge) been expanded on.

There's a little bit of fluff-crunch mismatch early on in the half-ogre entry, where they're described as "little shorter, but significantly smarter, wielding a weapon with more skill than might have been expected." Unfortunately, their THACO is the same 17 as ogres'...

In the ecology section, "the sages" are mentioned as having long worried about why half-ogres are one-half human (orc-ogre crossbreeds are either ologs or ogrillons), and about what this might imply about the relationship between humanity and ogre-kind. But no worries, we're not related to the big ugly brutes, not at all; they're just like orcs in that they can breed with everything else.

The whole paragraph echoes in-character racism to me, along with the mention about the "horrid hybrids", mongrelmen, being the end result of this racial mixing and how their chaotic evil (actually, they're LN!) tendencies obviously come from orcs (who are LE in 2e!) and ogres.

...

You know, I just got an idea about more interesting ogres and half-ogres. What if "half-ogre" is the natural state of ogres - big, rough, strong, but not especially dumb or evil by themselves? They, humans and halflings are all related, having been created by the same deity, or having sprung from a common ancestor.

However, at some point, something went horribly wrong with the ogres, and their blood has grown thick and sluggish. Now the pure-blooded ogres are crude, dull monsters who think only of eating and crushing and who wallow in their own filth. The only way to avoid this degradation is to breed with humans, to thin their ogrish blood so that there is still a new generation that can seek a solution to this tragedy of the race.

Humans, of course, are much more familiar with the thick-blooded monster ogres than with the true ogre clans who interbreed with humans, and tend to react very very badly to the idea that they should help keeping a smarter race of ogres around...

(Heavily inspired by the trolls of Fredrik K. Andersson; see "[Day of the Lure](#)", for example. Should be SFW, but may be borderline NSFW.)

ESkemp

02-23-2009 10:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10016268)

I think the problem is that the ogre is a pretty pedestrian monster. It's big, dumb, ugly and strong. They're not as big as giants, as ravenous and monstrous as trolls, not as smart as goblinoids, not as flexible as humans, not as iconic as orcs...

I dunno. I think they have their own portion of the iconic mindshare as the "wicked ogres" from fairy tales, but unfortunately D&D art doesn't generally play to that. An ogre is a dangerous man-eater in folklore, sort of the brutish male equivalent to the hag, but for the most part D&D tends to depict them as creatures of varying resemblance to humanity in caveman-like skins with big clubs. The Warhammer universe does a pretty good job of making some fairly iconic ogres, in no small part because they deliberately set out to say "People are afraid of ogres because they will eat you." One quick setup of a bunch of ruthlessly carnivorous gluttons who worship an ever-hungry maw-god later, and there you go.

If there were more of an obvious range from "dumb ogre in skins" to "cunning man-eating sorcerous monster," I think they'd be a considerably more popular critter. There'd be more reasons to use them than the simple "Well, the players are ready for 4+1 HD now."

noisms

02-23-2009 10:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Crap, I forgot both the Half-Ogres *and* the Slithering Tracker. I'll do those tomorrow.

Sleeper

02-24-2009 12:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)

Ooze/Slime/Jelly

I'll do all of these in one go, because...well, you know. You have to hand it to the designers, though - they really do take a genuine shot at making the oozes interesting: "The oozes, slimes and jellies of the underworld are hideous,

amorphous creatures that are the bane of all that lives, dissolving the weapons, armor, and flesh of their victims."
Ooooooh!

One thing I do rather like about the oozes, slimes and jellies is that they are both mindless and relentless - like zombies or Aliens or the Borg. I wonder if you could base a campaign around that - Olive Slimes gradually spreading their tendrils across an entire continent. A genuine possibility for post-apocalyptic fantasy, in fact: A thousand years after the Olive Slime plague destroyed the land of Blah, the first explorers from Soandso country come ashore....

I always liked the slimes and oozes. Along with the mimics and the otyugh, the gelatinous cube is a classic example of a monster designed for the dungeon. That raises several possibilities.

Have dungeons been around a really, *really* long time, long enough for species to develop with characteristics that are specifically geared toward the dungeon ecology? This raises the questions: Why have dungeons existed for millions of years? Who made them? Why?

Or perhaps evolution under the influence of high magic jumps in spurts, causing radical changes over a very short period of time. Perhaps through some kind of sharing of the genetic code between vastly different species? (Which doesn't exactly happen among animals and other more complex species in the real world.) Or sympathetic magic? Perhaps humans who live in the mountains too long become dwarves, while creatures trapped in the dungeon become dungeoned?

Or similar to the way certain insects, coyotes, rats, and pigeons have adapted to live in cities: Are they invasive species that just had the right set of characteristics to thrive in the peculiar environment? Or are they like dogs or cattle, domesticated and specifically cultivated, bred, and perhaps even engineered for the use of the dungeon masters? So who are these dungeon masters? What kind of cooperative, economic, or other value do the new breeds of monsters serve? Domestication goes back into prehistory; we're back to asking: How old exactly are dungeons?

Explaining *why* all this happens, the implied natural history of D&D, is even more fascinating than trying to make sense of the economy. And what impact does it have on the world? A medieval world where cities didn't become cesspits of filth, thanks to the otyugh? Where high-grade steels are possible because a variation of the gray ooze eats out all the impurities from a chunk of iron and leaves behind strengthening carbon deposits? (An alternate explanation for damascening.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)

One thing I do rather like about the oozes, slimes and jellies is that they are both mindless and relentless - like zombies or Aliens or the Borg. I wonder if you could base a campaign around that - Olive Slimes gradually spreading their tendrils across an entire continent. A genuine possibility for post-apocalyptic fantasy, in fact: A thousand years after the Olive Slime plague destroyed the land of Blah, the first explorers from Soandso country come ashore....

I do like the idea of adding the slimes and oozes to the list of "monsters as disease". We already have dozens of varieties of undead and lycanthropes. Fiercely contagious and with an incredibly short incubation time, they'd spread like wildfire. Even worse, they think. A single deliberate diaspora could spread it across the world. Imagine if the Andromeda Strain could not only foil simple quarantine precautions, but if it could problem solve, build tools, and cast spells? Humanity and all the other related "good" species would be under the constant threat of extinction.

The oozes aren't that smart, but what if we've already lost a part of the continent? Under the sway of the molds, with smarter varieties like the myconids constantly threatening to burst out and overwhelm civilization?

Which explains why adventuring parties exist. They might kill a few dragons or manticores for publicity, but their real purpose? Scorched earth. Keeping an eye to the entrails and a nose to the vapors, so they discover the infections before they get out of hand, and exterminate everything. Because it's the only way to be sure.

Old guilds, chartered royal companies, they are the last best hope of humanity.

Which is why the normal reactionary, prudish, and backward populace tolerates them. Coming into the village, living like kings. Taking what they want, with the threat of force. Stealing their fairest and bravest the sons and daughters with their libertine sexual ways and the lure of excitement and a life that doesn't involve shoveling dung for 14 hours a day for the rest of their lives. The villagers hate them, yes, but their myths and tales hammer it home. They're necessary. Against all the evils in the night. So grudgingly they succor the too-human monsters who slaughtered their neighbors in the hamlet over the hill, razed their homes and left not a single living or unliving soul among the now-empty groves.

That's why it's a medieval world. Peasants are serfs, slaves to the land and their feudal master. If free commerce and trade existed, and peasants were allowed to move from land to land, there would be no stopping these plagues. Only the adventuring parties have a special dispensation, and they're closely examined after every quest to make sure they aren't infected. By a hidebound caste with an incredible intolerance for anything that smacks of infection. By the priests, of course.

Quote:

Originally Posted by ESkemp (Post 10016555)

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We did discuss this a bit, back in the hag entry. I like the idea of ogres as puberty gone wrong. Casting them as uneducated but clever and with a wicked sense of humor would make them better denizens of a haunted forest. Highwaymen that aren't doomed to be driven out by the smarter humans. Ambitious lackeys of a dragon, going on esoteric missions. Laughing brutes notorious for playing crude games with the wee little races when they're bored. Maybe even a little of the Wild Hunt.

Making them explicitly one species with the hags would be a step in the right direction, and perhaps emphasizing the magic. Like the goblins, who really should have a thousand shapes and forms, the ogres could be inclined toward a natural form of magic. Even the less talented types would have petty little cantrips. The ability to change their hair color. The more talented would be the magi or the hags, learning magical tricks like invisibility or haruspicy or the ability to change their appearance.

demiurge1138

02-24-2009 02:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

The best thing about gelatinous cubes is their transparency. Coupled with people who are terrible at Spot checks (aka, almost every character in every game I run) can lead to good times. For instance, in my Prehistoric game (all of the PC races were kobolds and lizardfolk and other reptilian things), one of the PCs stayed behind in the underground Kobold Kapital for a day while the rest of the party took off "because I can catch up", what with his very good move speed. So he takes off, running a mile a minute, and I say "make a Spot check". Which he failed. And have the rest of the party make Listen checks. Which they failed.

So the party hears their ally moving towards them, shouting a greeting which suddenly comes to a strangled stop. And

they turn around to see their ally suspended in the air, his flesh slowly dissolving in the gelatinous cube that was sneaking up on the rest of them.

There's also something in the 3e Arms and Equipment Guide that's so crazy I have to share. There's mention of gelatinous cube riders, who wear a ring that encases them in a bubble of force, which they then tempt the cube to swallow. Once inside, they direct the cube's movements by slamming on the bubble, sending ripples in the cube's surface in the desired direction.

Oh, and because Bob the Angry Flower is always relevant:

<http://www.angryflower.com/everyb.gif>

6inTruder

02-24-2009 03:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

"Cube!"

Kakita Kojiro

02-24-2009 07:59 AM

I once had a GM afflict us with, not only a Gelatinous Cube, but also a Gelatinous Tetrahedron, Gelatinous Octahedron, Gelatinous Dodecahedron, and Gelatinous Icosahedron. Because he was an engineer, he probably had each one with special powerz varying by what Platonic Solid they were... but, eh. We just ganged up on the Gelatinous Tetrahedron, because we all hated those damn little caltrop dice, anyway.

However, since I was looking for a good world-after-the-world-ends idea, I'm totally going to have a world that had been overrun by slimes, oozes, and jellies. The oceans long since assimilated into one, cyclopean Ochre Jelly. The lands empty of all life but slimes and molds, with lakes that are enormous oozes linked by rivers that are no more than their mating pseudopods. Maybe throw in some sentient olive slime, or yellow mold. Should make a nice twist on a "world overcome by zombie apocalypse" to encounter.

Mr. Teapot

02-24-2009 09:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10015339)
What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion?

- A) Ogres fell on the weekend, when people are busy doing stuff not at their computers.
- B) the Ogre entry in the 2nd ed MM is notably lacking in interesting flavor text or plot hooks.
- C) they're a really straightforward monster to use (especially if they serve some other smarter monster) so you don't get the "desperately looking for ways to make something lame into something cool" that appears in other entries in this thread.
- D) Iconic monster paralysis (everybody's done a bunch with these things already = harder to do something new)

Those all get combined to make for lame discussion.

Mr. Teapot

02-24-2009 09:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)

Ah, the Katamari Roller of D&D. There isn't a whole lot more to say about it than that, though....

Now I need me a monster that grows bigger in size as it rolls stuff up into it. When it reduces a PC to 0 HP would be too uncommon: when it disarms an enemy? Whenever it hits an enemy? When it's missed by an attack?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)

*This parasitic creature attaches itself to your spinal column and gradually takes you over until you become an Olive Slime Creature - essentially a zombie. A little like a D&D version of a Body Snatcher, maybe. They are telepathically linked to their host, and go around attacking other living beings in order to spread the slime disease. **Probably the most usable and interesting of the various oozes.***

Weird that these get tagged as most usable and interesting, since they're the least commonly found kind. If any adventures I've seen are to judge, anyway. Slime creating zombie things is more compelling a plot than a puddle of green goo, though.

JRM

02-24-2009 07:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssi (Post 10015404)

Apparently, they simply didn't think about it. As Dave Noonan (now fired, dammit) said,

Plus Mike Mearls did a '[Monster Makeover](#)' of the 3E Ogre Magi into a sneaky leadership type.

While I agree with some of his modifications (Ogre Magi should definitely be a lower CR than 8, and I like the idea of giving them fast healing instead of regeneration), some of the points I disagree with (e.g. complaining they can't use *sleep* against the typical party they encounter, there are many Japanese stories about monsters stealing/robbing/tormenting people after putting them to sleep I think they really have to have this power. In such stories the 'heroes' end up escaping the sleep-effect or are immune to it, so why not translate that into the Ogre Magi could neutralize the low-level guards of the people who call the adventurers in? Or, if you really want them to put the PCs to sleep, give the Magi *deeper slumber* instead).

Oh, and limiting the OM's use of *invisibility* would solve excessive use of the "hit and fade and regenerate", but I'm not so sure I want that. I like the idea that the party have to devise some trick or trap to prevent the

'Demon Ogre' plaguing the village from escaping to heal and return the next night.

JRM

02-24-2009 07:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10015339)

What is it about ogres that makes such uninteresting discussion? I can't think of anything cool to say about them either, but I feel like there's some massive amount of untapped potential for something wicked cool here.

I hope we don't fizzle out like this when we get to orcs.

Maybe if you just make them recurrent NPCs long enough, some will end up "wicked cool"?

In my old homebrew campaign there were a lot of ogres and a few half-ogres (the latter have all been half ogre and half half-orc so far). Maybe a few examples of them would help:

There's a tribe of ogres in the mountains whose chief has married a half-orc cleric. Some of the PCs have now made deals with them, hiring them as "border guards" who give safe passage to trade caravans bearing a special pass (while not extending the same courtesy to the PC's trade rivals, needless to say).

One of those PCs has a half-ogre henchman (one of the half-ogre offspring of the chief mentioned above), who deliberately overdoes the "stupid and brutal" stick but is actually more cunning, if not quite as intelligent, as his employer.

Sometimes I add magical traits to ogres, to give them more of a fabulous feel. I've had an Ogre Bandit with a few levels of sorcerer, and a more "fairy tale" ogre who was just a standard ogre with a few minor magical items, including one that let him disguise himself as a man-sized humanoid. That ogre disguised itself as a dwarf and met up with the party, and succeeded in capturing the halfling who he carried home and had his enslaved house-servant put in a pie. Fortunately, the rest of the party got their before he was placed in the over.

There's also a tribe of anthropophagous "fairy tale" ogres led by a powerful sorceress ogress who have long picked off the occasional human in one part of the campaign world. These regard the local tribesmen as being their "herd", so when other monsters attack their 'livestock' (e.g. an outbreak of undead) they may co-operate with some human adventurers to eliminate the mutual threat.

JRM

02-24-2009 11:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10016268)

(Heavily inspired by the trolls of Fredrik K. Andersson; see "Day of the Lure", for example. Should be SFW, but may be borderline NSFW.)

Andersson also has an interesting interpretation of the Nightmare as a spectral horse that torments those who abuse equines by sitting upon their chests as they sleep. See picture 102 in that gallery.

It may just be me, but there's something rather disturbingly suggestive about that picture.

Wakshaani

02-25-2009 12:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Backtracking a bit to Ogres... absolutely they have to be man-eaters. Make "Grind your bones to make my bread" a trueism that makes people start to rethink the whole "Let's go stab 'em" mentality... it's one thing if you expect an Orc band to capture you for slaves or maybe just cut you down with an axe, quite another to see an ogre eating a sentient being (Possibly living!) and know that you're next on his plate. Make "Ogre Chef" a popular thing in humanoid cultures, where invading an evil lair could well find the kitchen, with meaty chunks, discarded bones, and an Ogre in a blood-stained apron, wielding a big ol' meat cleaver, and more than happy to dunk a halfling straight into his boiling stewpot after a grapple check.

Which reminds me.

You should always, ALWAYS, abutt your Ogre Kingdoms with your Halfling Lands. The two go together like bread and butter, with lazy, ever-hungry Ogres bullying the halflings who, in turn, half to out-think and out-quick their way from being the morning meal.

Ogres take up the role of cavalry in most "Evil Armies", being large, charge-oriented smashing types who can tear apart a line formation and trample the average malitiaman under foot. Don't be afraid to outfit the rare Ogre in heavy armor and greataxe, instead of simple furs and a club, as the hobgoblin captains go out of their way to outfit the big guys properly.

JRM

02-25-2009 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 10021771)

Backtracking a bit to Ogres... absolutely they have to be man-eaters. Make "Grind your bones to make my bread" a trueism that makes people start to rethink the whole "Let's go stab 'em" mentality... it's one thing if you expect an Orc band to capture you for slaves or maybe just cut you down with an axe, quite another to see an ogre eating a sentient being (Possibly living!) and know that you're next on his plate. Make "Ogre Chef" a popular thing in humanoid cultures, where invading an evil lair could well find the kitchen, with meaty chunks, discarded bones, and an Ogre in a blood-stained apron, wielding a big ol' meat cleaver,

The more intelligent breeds of ogre are not mere rippers of man-flesh but *connoisseurs* of anthropophagy. That unfortunate the ogre is eating alive may have been force-fed a special diet for weeks before being tortured to give their flesh that additional tang of adrenaline.

Ogres are longer lived than men, have a much better developed sense of taste and smell (hence their ability to smell somebody's nationality - "Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman), love to eat and can stomach stuff that would make a rat blench. It's not surprising that the longer-lived ogre cultures have developed a highly sophisticated cuisine, albeit one that may be disturbing to most humans. A skilled ogre chef is in great demand amongst humanoid tribes, not only is it a status symbol for a orc chief to have his meals cooked by an Ogre Master, the ogre's mastery of diet can improve the health of the other tribesorcs, help preserve

foodstores (and make the spoiled ones taste more palatable) plus, as an additional bonus, all Ogre chefs are masters of humanoid anatomy, so can double as proficient surgeons and torturers.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakshaani (Post 10021771)

and more than happy to dunk a halfling straight into his boiling stewpot after a grapple check.

No, no no! Boiling a halfling in stock ruins the texture of its soft meat. You singe the hair off its head and feet in a fire, then dip it in Grogblar Number three batter before plunging the halfling whole into a vat of boiling oil. Done right, such a tempura halfling is both succulent and crispy, and is sure to impress the more refined Ogre Mage's palate.

Sleeper

02-25-2009 02:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Anthrophagy can be fun, but I think it just further confuses ogres and giants.

I think the tricky magical connection might be the best way to differentiate the two. There's some speculation that the ogre was based on Gilles de Rais (aka Bluebeard, though not the same person as the wife-killing one). He was serial killer who fought alongside Joan of Arc in the 100 Years War, and was eventually hanged for sodomy, heresy, witchcraft, and of course murder. Another source is the Jekyll and Hyde story.

Unlike giants, which are an entirely separate breed, perhaps ogres are humans, gone wrong. Ogrism might be a disease or an affliction, caused not by an infection but a curse, the result of certain depraved acts. When a human commits certain abhorrent sexual crimes or stealthy yet brutal murder (think "Murder of the Rue Morgue", not just a standard passion killing), they start to manifest bestial traits. Wiry hair sprouts, from eyebrows to knuckles. The body bulges and grows, becoming muscled (not power-lift muscled, but bulky natural muscles that seem like a layer of fat until you see the corded thews ripple). They gain inhuman strength and stature, though they become hunched and heavy-browed. Their finger nails become almost like claws, and their canines extend.

Sometimes this is a permanent thing. A wendigo might be a particularly degenerate and feral example. Sometimes it is more evanescent; the hideous transformation appears in the middle of a blind rage or when indulging in a particularly foul act, and then vanishes again. Almost like a second personality, that takes over and abets their crimes. Violent raging youths who commit unspeakable crimes on the travelers they waylay, corrupt elderly nobles who kidnap and torture young maidens and hide behind a veneer of civility and frailty, outcast and rejected heretics burning with a desire for twisted revenge. This can also be caused by experimenting in certain vile corners of sorcery. De Rais squandered his wealth, and supposedly tried to sacrifice children to a demon to regain it, which seems perfectly fitting. Rarely true magicians, they often learn a few dirty magical tricks. To hide themselves, to deceive.

Mr. Teapot

02-25-2009 03:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10021948)

That unfortunate the ogre is eating alive may have been force-fed a special diet for weeks before being tortured to give their flesh that additional tang of adrenaline.

A PC is kidnapped by ogres, who instead of torturing them and eating right away, the PC lives a life of luxury: nice sumptuous apartment, daily massages, a diet consisting of rich fatty foods and copious amounts of beer... only to discover this is all to give their flesh some nice marbled texture before they get eaten.

As I understand it, you don't want your meat animals panicked when they die, since stress hurts the meat quality. But Ogre diets might be different: maybe they like the taste of frightened meat.

Inyssius

02-25-2009 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10022118)

Anthrophagy can be fun, but I think it just further confuses ogres and giants.

I'm still planning an adventure set around six dragons embodying St. Thomas Aquinas's subdivisions of Gluttony, by the way--

- * *Praepropere* - eating too soon.
- * *Laute* - eating too expensively (washedly).
- * *Nimis* - eating too much.
- * *Ardenter* - eating too eagerly (burningly).
- * *Studiose* - eating too daintily (keenly).
- * *Forente* - eating wildly (boringly).

JRM

02-25-2009 03:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10022118)

Anthrophagy can be fun, but I think it just further confuses ogres and giants.

Well I'll disagree with you on the first point, since to my mind man-eating is a key feature of a traditional folkloric ogre, and I have no difficulty with there being a confusing overlap with giants, or considering some ogres as being a type of giant (or all of them in AD&D's case).

Contrariwise, roughly man-sized ogres may exist alongside their giant-sized cousins and be just as frightening. They look human, although they may be bit larger, much more vigorous and in some cases rather dim (like AD&D half-ogres) but look upon human beings as tasty victims... and that big friendly guy who runs the tavern your party is drinking at could be one of them.

The RuneQuest / HeroWars games have a good example of this kind of ogre, the Gloranthan ogre is a breed of human tainted by Chaos. They've got great strength of charisma and muscle, but literally have to eat human

flesh to survive and feel no guilt about doing so (and they worship chaos demons, which just adds more reason for regular folk to want to hunt them down and exterminate them).

Sleeper

02-25-2009 03:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10022441)

I'm still planning an adventure set around six dragons embodying St. Thomas Aquinas's subdivisions of Gluttony, by the way--

** Praepropere - eating too soon.*

** Laute - eating too expensively (washedly).*

** Nimis - eating too much.*

** Ardenter - eating too eagerly (burningly).*

** Studiose - eating too daintily (keenly).*

** Forente - eating wildly (boringly).*

With the Latin, those also make good genera names. Let's see... the dragon 1) devours new knights while it's belly is still swollen (complains incessantly about tummyaches), 2) slaughters and discards the common soldiers and other riff-raff (is surrounded by a cloud of vultures) searching for only the most elegantly attired victims, 3) is the ravager, devouring entire countries worth of cattle (refugees on the road flee the herd-animal famine of the highlands), 4) chokes down knights in the midst of combat, lances and all (spits up fiery blood), 5) insists on only eating virgins, or perhaps those with a lawful good aura if virgins have grown scarce (a connoisseur of the Holy), 6) is the Anthony Boudain of dragons, traveling the world to find new flavors of champions (imperious invader).

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10022488)

Well I'll disagree with you on the first point, since to my mind man-eating is a key feature of a traditional folkloric ogre, and I have no difficulty with there being a confusing overlap with giants, or considering some ogres as being a type of giant (or all of them in AD&D's case).

Doesn't leave much to cover then, after the giant entry.

noisms

02-25-2009 08:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10022488)

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I have no problem with the overlap between giants and ogres either... but I tend to think of giants as having a culture of some kind: they have their own societies and languages, and they construct things. Ogres, though, are a-cultural brutes who exist only to eat human beings and destroy what they make.

noisms

02-25-2009 11:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Because I forgot...

Half-Ogre

Not a huge amount to say about Half-Ogres, since they're covered by the Ogre discussion, really. I like the idea of 'Hybrid Settlements' away from human society, where Half-Ogres, Half-Orcs, Orog and Ogrillons can get together and live without fear of intolerance, or something. Maybe an equivalent of the *quilombo* settlements runaway slaves formed in South America.

I also like this weird foray into pseudo-science:

Quote:

Sages have expressed much concern over the years, wondering why ogres can interbreed with humans but not with elves or halflings. When the actual answer was discovered, the sages' concerns proved unfounded. The explanation had nothing to do with any supposed common origin of humans and ogres, but rather in a unusual characteristic that ogres share with orcs: rapidly adaptive biology. Just as orcs and ogres can adapt quickly to any terrain, from forests to the highest mountains, their genetic construction allows them breed with any humanoid race.

So...er....that explains that then.

And the final paragraph is a nice mess of strangeness:

Quote:

This ability to breed easily is frequently passed on to their progeny. Half-ogres can also breed successfully with most other humanoid races. If this process continues for many generations, the result is a horrible hybrid known as a mongrelman. Many mongrelmen have strong strains of orc and ogre in their bloodlines, which may account for their chaotic evil attitudes.

The half-ogre shares the ogre's place in the ecosystem: that of a plague upon demihumans and humans, lusting for treasure and making neither crafts nor good labor. The beginnings of half-ogre poetry have been around for many years, but it is exceptionally ugly and disturbing.

Half-Ogre poetry?!? Had someone been reading *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*?

Also, mongrelmen are Lawful Neutral in 2nd edition - seems somebody forgot to update the Half-Ogre entry.

Ogrillon

This is a cross between a female Orc and a male Ogre; the reverse produces an Orog, who are in the orc entry. Don't know why they felt the need to split Ogrillons and Orog. Oddly, the Ogrillon has characteristics that neither Ogres nor Orcs have - armoured skin and horn-reinforced fists.

Because I also forgot....

Slithering Tracker

The most intelligent of the jellies and I think the only MM creature that has a diet of "Living Plasma" which it sucks from its victims.

Two nice rumours: firstly, that Slithering Trackers were created by an evil wizard *removing all the bones* from his enemies; secondly that it is possible that there is a diary or journal hidden in some long-forgotten wizard's laboratory that details the Slithering Tracker Curse. *Power Word: Become Slithering Tracker?*

Kakita Kojiro

02-25-2009 11:19 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)

... place in the ecosystem: that of a plague upon demihumans and humans, lusting for treasure and making neither crafts nor good labor.

So, ogres and half-ogres are... adventurers? PCs?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)

This is a cross between a female Orc and a male Ogre; the reverse produces an Orog, who are in the orc entry. Don't know why they felt the need to split Ogrillons and Orog. Oddly, the Ogrillon has characteristics that neither Ogres nor Orcs have - armoured skin and horn-reinforced fists.

Compare the [Liger](#) and [Tigon](#). They do have different physical characteristics, albeit not as different as orogs and ogrillons.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)

Half-Ogre

Not a huge amount to say about Half-Ogres, since they're covered by the Ogre discussion, really. I like the idea of 'Hybrid Settlements' away from human society, where Half-Ogres, Half-Orcs, Orog and Ogrillons can get together and live without fear of intolerance, or something. Maybe an equivalent of the quilombo settlements runaway slave: formed in South America.

There are a couple of little tit-bits in the Half Ogre entry I found interesting.

Firstly "Their sense of smell is better than an ogre's, but it falls short of a human's" is odd, I've long thought of ogres of having an excellent sense of smell, maybe as good as a dog's, but the half-ogre entry says that half-ogres have an olfactory scent inferior than humans, while full ogres are even worse. I don't like that at all, so I'll just assume that some sage misinterpreted a report that "half-ogres smell bad, true ogres smell even worse" wrongly, as referring to their sense of smell rather than the descriptions "Their odor is noticeable, but it is not as overpowering as that of a full-blooded ogre".

Hmm, why do ogres stink so? My preferred interpretation is that it's not due to hatred of hygiene (or entirely a hatred of hygiene), but that like dogs and some other mammals they cultivate a "personal stink" and "tribal odor" that they view as part of their identity. Thus an ogre can tell which of its friends has been in the cave recently, and literally "sniff out" the presence of intruders, just by the smell.

Oh, and the entry says half-ogres live about 110 years. That's twenty years longer than ogres, who in turn live longer than humans. Now I'm imagining Ogre Baronies, each ruled by an elderly half-ogre who is a high level fighter, seasoned with the cunning of a human lifetime's worth of banditry, but still as strong as any human.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)

Ogrillon

I dislike the official explanation of the Ogrillon (or the Orog for that matter). To my mind an ogre-orc cross should result in something similar to a half-ogre, not this weird apelike horny skinned punch-monster.

My preference is that Ogrillons are related to Norkers, maybe the result of a cross between a norker and a ogre or descendants of such a union. In my campaign Norkers are an artificial species, an attempt to make cheap disposable troops - you don't need to buy them armour, because their skin is as good as field plate. Maybe norkers are the result of the same or similar experiments, trying to create a humanoid legion who you don't need to give weapons to (they just use their fists) and don't need to pay much (they agree to fight just for the love of battle, and disdain treasure apart from a few gold pieces they keep as "good luck charms").

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)

Slithering Tracker

The most intelligent of the jellies and I think the only MM creature that has a diet of "Living Plasma" which it sucks from its victims.

Two nice rumours: firstly, that Slithering Trackers were created by an evil wizard removing all the bones from his enemies; secondly that it is possible that there is a diary or journal hidden in some long-forgotten wizard's laborator that details the Slithering Tracker Curse. Power Word: Become Slithering Tracker?

May I just say the Slithering Tracker's **illustration** deserves honourable mention in the list of "Monstrous Compendium pictures that are a bit sucky". I would like it a lot better if the artist hadn't given the Ooze those goofy eyes.

One thing I find odd about the Monstrous Manual version is that it makes no mention of their standard modus operandi. They're called Slithering Trackers because if they come across the trail of a party of adventurers they **track** them until they stop to sleep, then **slither** into camp (being able to slip through barred doors etc) to try to drain one of the sleepers dry without the lookout noticing.

They're a nice concept as a monster, but on the face of it have a few problems with using them. Either the PCs notice the tracker, in which case they can kill it fairly easily unless it manages to paralyze all of them (in which case they're all dead), or they don't notice the Tracker and it drains a sleeping PC dry (in which case somebody's dead). What else is there to do with them?

Well, firstly there's the old "mistaken identity monster" where a village is terrified when people start turning up as dry husks after sleeping, leading to the assumption that they're being victimized by a vampire. I vaguely remember an old Dungeon or Dragon magazine article that used that idea.

Secondly, if a Slithering Tracker is created by a wizard what would they use it for? They could be used as a guardian if the evil mage was more interested in capturing intruders than killing them, but my thinking is they were created as a weapon of terror and assassination - the wizard's enemies simply turn up dead in the morning, without a mark on them.

Thirdly, if the rumour is true that Slithering Trackers are transformed human beings, do they retain any of their memories? Maybe an evil wizard creates a Tracker from, say, Lady Ednith the paladin, who promptly succeeds in killing said wizard, then the PCs are quested with helping her find a high-enough level good wizard to *polymorph other* her back into humanity before her personality fades into a monster's.

Fourth, Slithering Trackers are intelligent so can they be talked to and even negotiated with? Maybe an orc tribe's shaman (or the Ogre Chef) employs a slithering tracker assistant to help treat wounded warriors - its paralysis makes it easy to operate of them without movement (whether it still hurts or not is another question). In return, the Tracker gets a few minutes sip of plasma from several orcs, enough for it to live off but not enough to threaten their health.

Fifth, on the subject of negotiating with Trackers, they must be intimately familiar with the layout of their dungeon, having slithered over every inch of it. Maybe they know where the treasure is buried? I'm imagining an evil NPC making a deal with a slithering tracker, giving it slaves and abducted travellers to eat in return for gems it takes out of a treasure vault buried behind tens of yards of rockfall - it can easily slither through the

gaps, and has no use for the treasure.

YojimboC

02-25-2009 10:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)
Ogrillon

This is a cross between a female Orc and a male Ogre; the reverse produces an Orog, who are in the orc entry. Don't know why they felt the need to split Ogrillons and Orog. Oddly, the Ogrillon has characteristics that neither Ogres nor Orcs have - armoured skin and horn-reinforced fists.

Not everything the Fiend Folio gave us was as cool as the Gith or the Lizard King or Flinds. Sometimes, you get Ogrillons.

JRM

02-25-2009 11:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10026149)
Not everything the Fiend Folio gave us was as cool as the Gith or the Lizard King or Flinds. Sometimes, you get Ogrillons.

Well personally I don't much care for the Flind, and consider them about as uninteresting as the Ogrillon. Neither of them hold a candle to the Fiend Folio's most majestic entries...

...such as the Flumph.~)

The FF monster I got the most joy out of as a DM was probably the Grell, those are a wonderful monster.

Sleeper

02-26-2009 12:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10026422)
Well personally I don't much care for the Flind, and consider them about as uninteresting as the Ogrillon. Neither of them hold a candle to the Fiend Folio's most majestic entries...

...such as the Flumph.~)

I love the flumph.

Especially when the [epic pseudonatural template](#) is applied. The classic sanity-breaking tentacle-monster becomes CR 18, yet it only has 26 hp and is still lawful good. :)

JRM

02-26-2009 02:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10026532)
I love the flumph.

Especially when the epic pseudonatural template is applied. The classic sanity-breaking tentacle-monster becomes CR 18, yet it only has 26 hp and is still lawful good. :)

Well going by the template it would be CR 17, since the base is a 2HD CR1 creature.

However, the notion of a pseudonatural flumph is definitely a worthy one, although I'd be tempted to add Dragon issue 289's Kaiju template to it as well...

Sleeper

02-26-2009 02:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10027019)
Well going by the template it would be CR 17, since the base is a 2HD CR1 creature.

However, the notion of a pseudonatural flumph is definitely a worthy one, although I'd be tempted to add Dragon issue 289's Kaiju template to it as well...

The one I statted up all those years ago used [this CR 2 version as a base](#), though you could argue its CR is off.

EmperorSeth

02-26-2009 04:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Going back a few days, I never really used ogres or oozes that much. The former tend to fit in to the "well, we need a heavy, and the party's second level now" category, but without reason to get into the character at all. As for oozes, the mechanics tend to bother me even worse than the rust monster. They all seem to have the "it eats metal, so say goodbye to your weapons" schtick, or they destroy your armor when they attack you, or they split whenever attacked,

or something. I can see how that would get old fast.

Now, if I wanted to use the ogres more creatively, I can see them as sort of extreme variant of the classic "frat boy" bully. Sadistic, but more amused by it than for any real reason. If an ogre pushes you into the mud, he'll laugh. If he throws a rock at you so hard that your head gets knocked off, he'll laugh. An ogre won't even see the difference. The only problem is coming up with a reason people don't just murder them right back in the latter case, and the half-ogre suggests a pretty good one. Imagine if the ogres, or at least allies of the ogres, are in charge. At the very least there could be a shared, very tenuous border and the good guy nation can't afford a war right now, so they tend to look the other way when the ogres get rowdy.

demiurge1138

02-26-2009 06:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

It may be because I have fond memories of slaughtering them by the droves in *Icewind Dale*, but I don't have any issue with orogs and ogrillions being fairly different from orcs and ogres. Hybrid vigor can do strange things to crossbreeds, especially in a high magic setting. I do like the idea of tying ogrillions to norkers, though--I love those guys.

JRM

02-26-2009 07:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10027149)

The one I started up all those years ago used this CR 2 version as a base, though you could argue its CR is off.

I was using the stats from The Portable Hole Full of Beer, which says it has WotC's permission to use the Flumph. That gives the basic flumph exactly the same stats as the Creature Catalogue version you posted, except it is CR1.

JRM

02-26-2009 07:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10027657)

Now, if I wanted to use the ogres more creatively, I can see them as sort of extreme variant of the classic "frat boy" bully. Sadistic, but more amused by it than for any real reason. If an ogre pushes you into the mud, he'll laugh. If he throws a rock at you so hard that your head gets knocked off, he'll laugh. An ogre won't even see the difference. The only problem is coming up with a reason people don't just murder them right back in the latter case, and the half-ogre suggests a pretty good one. Imagine if the ogres, or at least allies of the ogres, are in charge. At the very least there could be a shared, very tenuous border and the good guy nation can't afford a war right now, so they tend to look the other way when the ogres get rowdy.

Yes, that's one approach I've used for ogres, or at least a type of ogre. I tend to think of many of the D&D humanoid races as being magically exaggerated races of human, but still technically human (hence all the half-breeds). Thus, I like to think of ogres as being able to interact with other human(oid) societies in a meaningful fashion, not just "Og kill! Og destroy! Og eat!"

So, sure ogres can be brutish creatures, boisterous and arrogant about how their strength exceeds the "weakling" humans and goblins, but they can make strong servants if kept on a short leash, and even those that think they are in charge of a mixed-race community (e.g. the classic orc or goblin tribe with some ogre toughs) many are dim enough to be tricked into doing all the heavy and dangerous work without the lion's share of the real spoils.

Sleeper

02-26-2009 07:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10028494)

I was using the stats from The Portable Hole Full of Beer, which says it has WotC's permission to use the Flumph. That gives the basic flumph exactly the same stats as the Creature Catalogue version you posted, except it is CR1.

Well, if anyone cares, here's the true flumph, as originally intended by the original author instead of the horrible series of typos that resulted in the version published in the original Fiend Folio,* updated to v3.5:
Spoiler: True flumph

* I'm lying.

randomgamer8466

02-26-2009 08:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

"Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman"

Sorry to burst bubbles and discredit theories, but this was said by a Cloud Giant, not an Ogre.

Like anybody cares:

My high school AD&D1e Monty Hauled character was a half-ogre who had melted a Vorpal Sword and a Defender down and forged them together to make a battleaxe that had the properties of both. He rode a titanothere (a prehistoric rhino) into battle, and once killed Sir Launcelot, who had the misfortune to be statted in the original Deities & Demigods.

If you stat it, we will kill it.

noisms

02-26-2009 06:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

I'll start a new thread for the next entry, as we're now up to post 3000+....

sim_james

02-26-2009 08:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Make sure you post the link here - I don't read anything else in the d20 subforum, and I'd hate to miss the new thread just because I'm not subscribed to it yet.

Mikaze

02-26-2009 08:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10016097)

Ooze/Slime/Jelly

Mustard Jelly

This breed was created when a young wizardress tried to polymorph herself into an Ochre Jelly and something went wrong. Why she wanted to do that anyway is left unsaid. It can emit noxious lethargy-inducing vapours and split itself into segments to attack.

The mustard jelly's origin has bugged me ever since I read the Monstrous Manual, because I knew there must have been a specific story being referred to and I never found out what it was. At first I just thinking "Huh. Must be a story there." Then I get deeper into 2e era fluff(God bless Planescape) and I keep thinking back and remembering that I still don't know what the story was behind it or if there even was a story behind it. And it irritated me.

And I *still* don't know the story behind it. If there is one.

It's like some damn itch you manage to put out of mind until you think about it again.

JRM

02-27-2009 04:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10028607)

Well, if anyone cares, here's the true flumph, as originally intended by the original author instead of the horrible series of typos that resulted in the version published in the original Fiend Folio, updated to v3.5:*

Spoiler: True flumph

That's pretty close to how I figured it out, except that I made the AC 54 (10 base +1 size +8 Dex +35 natural) and the melee attack bonus +28 (+1 Base Attack +1 Size +11 Strength [Weapon Finesse feat is now irrelevant] +15 insight) and the Listen and Spot +12 instead of +10 (the original +7 plus an extra 5 for its increased Wisdom).

One thing I like about the Pseudonatural Flumph is its AC is so high it can only hit itself on a natural 20.:)

JRM

02-27-2009 04:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10027657)

Now, if I wanted to use the ogres more creatively, I can see them as sort of extreme variant of the classic "frat boy" bully. Sadistic, but more amused by it than for any real reason. If an ogre pushes you into the mud, he'll laugh. If he throws a rock at you so hard that your head gets knocked off, he'll laugh. An ogre won't even see the difference. The only problem is coming up with a reason people don't just murder them right back in the latter case, and the half-ogre suggests a pretty good one. Imagine if the ogres, or at least allies of the ogres, are in charge. At the very least there could be a shared, very tenuous border and the good guy nation can't afford a war right now, so they tend to look the other way when the ogres get rowdy.

Had another thought about Ogres today, maybe they're not humans exaggerated into grossly oversized evil fratboys, but perpetually underdeveloped evil giants, an exaggerated version of those horrible children who delight in tormenting weak and helpless creatures - but since they're ten feet tall, it's your character who's the "fly" they want to pull the wings off.

Hmm...

From the time he was born we knew there was something wrong about Tobo. He was small, weak and stupid, a crook-backed pygmy who was barely half the straight height of a regular giant when he finished growing.

The worse thing was that his soul was as shrunken and twisted as his body. That became clear on his First Hunt, when we took the new warriors out after sheep and goblins. The rest of the youths acted as giants should, crushing as many prey as they could while exulting in their strength. Tobo didn't do that, he caught a goblin alive and spent hours playing with it until it died.

When we asked his Dam about this, she told us he did that to any animal he could catch, and had once almost been mauled by her watchbear when he tried stealing one of her cubs.

So, we called the Shaman down from the mountain, and he told us what we all knew in our guts already - Tobo was ogre.

It wasn't long after that that Tobo attacked one of the little kids and bit a chunk out of her. Giant tradition was clear on what to do, the Chief ordered Tobo exiled from our lands, never to see our peaks again on pain of death. Let the humans deal with him.

Our tribe is still riven by this, for we'd never suffered the ogre curse before. Some accuse the Chief of angering the gods by not giving the right offerings, most blame Tobo's Sire, saying he must have strayed into a demonground and tainted his offspring, and a few whisper that Tobo's Dam had got "friendly" with that big Orog who's Chief of the neighbouring orc tribe.

Still, we were all glad to see the back of that sneaky runt. Even if he'd behaved himself, he was too weak to help the tribe, just a useless mouth to feed.

Mr. Teapot

02-27-2009 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10024474)
So...er....that explains that then.

Actually, no it doesn't. The last sentence (ogres can breed with anything humanoid) specifically contradicts the issue that bugged the sages in the first place (that ogres can't breed with elves or halflings but can with humans).

It also raises more questions about what orc-elf, orc-halfling, orc-dwarf, etc hybrids look like. Or for that matter, what ogre-elf, ogre-halfling, ogre-gnoll, etc. hybrids look like.

Which brings up the idea that I've seen suggested that Half-Orc (and Half-Elf and Half-Ogre and Half-Giant and any other Half-whatever race) should all be templates, not races. Then any race really could breed with them, much like how anybody can breed with a dragon.

Sleeper

02-27-2009 09:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10032524)
That's pretty close to how I figured it out, except that I made the AC 54 (10 base +1 size +8 Dex +35 natural) and the melee attack bonus +28 (+1 Base Attack +1 Size +11 Strength [Weapon Finesse feat is now irrelevant] +15 insight) and the Listen and Spot +12 instead of +10 (the original +7 plus an extra 5 for its increased Wisdom).

One thing I like about the Pseudonatural Flumph is its AC is so high it can only hit itself on a natural 20.:)

Thanks for catching the math error in the AC, but the skills were deliberate. The base flumph has 18 skill ranks (Listen 5, Move Silently 4, Search 4, Spot 5), but in v3.5 a 2 HD aberration with a +0 Int mod only gets 10 skill ranks. So I dropped Search, kept Hide and Move Silently equal, and split the rest between Listen and Spot (Listen 3, Move Silently 4, Spot 3).

I thought about changing Weapon Finesse (notice I removed all mention of the "bonus feat"; 2 HD v3.5 creatures get one feat automatically without having to rely on bonus feats), but decided it fit the concept better and, honestly, it doesn't matter in the slightest. The CR is a joke, anyway. The epic pseudonatural template applied to low-CR creatures creates untouchable nuisances, not serious threats. The weaker pseudonatural template in the Manual of the Planes is actually more suitable for real challenges :).

SuperG

02-27-2009 09:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10033352)

Actually, no it doesn't. The last sentence (ogres can breed with anything humanoid) specifically contradicts the issue that bugged the sages in the first place (that ogres can't breed with elves or halflings but can with humans).

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Actually, I read it more that Ogres adapt to be able to breed with the dominant population of the area they live in; thus, they cannot interbreed with Elves or Halflings because there are no Ogres living in halfling dominated lands.

noisms

02-27-2009 11:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10033352)

Actually, no it doesn't. The last sentence (ogres can breed with anything humanoid) specifically contradicts the issue that bugged the sages in the first place (that ogres can't breed with elves or halflings but can with humans).

That's kind of what I meant - I was being ironical. ;)

But now that SuperG mentions it, it does make sense if you look at it sideways and squint.

noisms

02-27-2009 12:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Here's Part IV.

JRM

02-27-2009 06:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part III, Ki~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10033925)

Thanks for catching the math error in the AC, but the skills were deliberate. The base flumph has 18 skill ranks (Listen 5, Move Silently 4, Search 4, Spot 5), but in v3.5 a 2 HD aberration with a +0 Int mod only gets 10 skill ranks. So I dropped Search, kept Hide and Move Silently equal, and split the rest between Listen and Spot (Listen 3, Move Silently 4, Spot 3).

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You're right about the skills not adding up, I didn't noticed that. I'd have patched it by giving the flumph a couple of +4 racial bonuses (Listen and Spot?) so the bonuses add up.

Did recognize the flaw with the CR and feat, but saw no need to elaborate on it - this is still a 2nd edition thread, after all.:)

Anyhows, I'll see you all in the next part of this thread, since this one's running dry.

noisms

02-27-2009 12:13 PM

[Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

So here we are in Episode IV, and still the end remains far from sight. But we're enjoying ourselves so let's continue. And what an entry to continue on!

Orc

Yep, here they are at last - those green-skinned ugly pig-nosed ape creatures we know and love. As with all the iconic D&D races it's difficult to say anything new about them, though I'm sure you'll try, but here's a list of some matters of interest I spotted in the entry:

- First, take a look at the description: "Orcs vary widely in appearance, as they frequently crossbreed with other species. In general, they resemble primitive humans with grey-green skin**covered with coarse hair**. Orcs have a slightly stooped posture, a low jutting forehead, and a snout instead of a nose, though comparisons between this facial feature and those of pigs are exaggerated and perhaps unfair." Notice the bit in bold? Are Orcs supposed to be covered in hair and I never realised??
- Orcs in 2nd edition are Lawful Evil militarists, rather than Chaotic Evil brutes. I've actually always preferred them that way, even if it does see them creep into the Hobgoblin sphere of influence. It's probably because "Many orc tribes have waged wars for decades and have developed a frightening efficiency with battle tactics", which is more of a Lawful Evil sounding creature than a Chaotic Evil one.
- "For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?
- "If the orcs are not in their lair, there is a 20% chance they will be escorting a train of 1-6 carts and 10-60 slave bearers bringing supplies, loot, or ransom and tribute to their orc chief or a stronger orc tribe..." I've never used this and don't think I ever even noticed it in the entry. The idea of a baggage train is pretty cool; it's also an obvious hook for an adventure (bring back the womenfolk kidnapped for ransom and being carried in a baggage train to blahblah land....).

- "Orcs have a reputation for cruelty that is deserved, but **humans are just as capable of evil as orcs.**" I wonder if PETA girl had a hand in that sentence...

Orogs

Orogs are a bit like the Big 'Uns and Black Orcs from Warhammer, or maybe Tolkien's Uruk-hai - essentially big elite orcs mixed with Ogre blood.

Half-orcs

This category encompasses not just half-orc/half-humans but half-orc/half-anything (except elves); orc-goblins, orc-hobgoblins are said to be most common, but I wonder what orc-halflings or orc-dwarves would look like? Anyway, like Half-ogres they sometimes form their own communities on the outside of other societies, which I'd like to use in a game sometime.

Kakita Kojiro

02-27-2009 12:22 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?

Micromanaging = Lawful Evil

As anyone in the corporate world knows very well. Although, probably, this gives the term "capitalist pig" a different meaning in D&D worlds.

6inTruder

02-27-2009 12:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

so you encounter one orc, two orcs, or infinite orcs. As those three assistants require another leader + 3 assistants, who require another leader + 3 assistants, who require ect ect ect...

demiurge1138

02-27-2009 01:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

It's weird, but I cannot use orcs in game without feeling sort of... self-conscious. Like, orcs are so widely used, in Lord of the Rings and Warcraft and Warhammer, etc, that it feels like everything that can be done with orcs has been done with orcs. No other humanoid affects me so.

Inyssius

02-27-2009 01:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Indeed. I feel the same way.

My solution: make them trollkin. Make them *feared*. Make them the size of a half-ogre, with beady eyes and sharklike jaws. They come in waves--first a few, then hordes--and their blood-encrusted shacks *crawl* with mold.

(If trolls were bugbears, they'd be goblins. ...and from that, you might be able to imagine my trolls. You don't want to mess with them.)

sim_james

02-27-2009 05:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I haven't thought much about orcs for years until the LOTR films were released, and then the various battles of Gondor made me re-examine them. Of course there were plenty of shots of orcs rushing about savagely, slaying and hacking... but I thought that I noticed a few orcs *stopping to eat people*. In the middle of battle. I know that the armies of Mordor must have been under-provisioned, but even so I imagine that orcs engage in battle anthrophagy not due to hunger, but hatred and rage.

It's a small thing, but orcs are more monstrous in my mind now.

As far as their alignment goes, as a Planescape GM I generally prefer orcs to be LE, in order to retain some of the setting material (orc wars in Acheron, most of the pantheon). More generally, though, I submit that orcs exhibit the alignment of whatever force is motivating and directing their energies. Left to their own devices, orcs are basically chaotic evil - but if controlled by a greater power (whether militarily as Saruman did or supernaturally as Sauron seems to) orcs can easily become lawful evil.

Of course, when Sauron was defeated his spirit left the orcs of Mordor, and so as they fled they immediately reverted to chaotic evil once more. That's why their rout was incredibly disorderly compared to the tactics they'd demonstrated earlier.

JRM

02-27-2009 07:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

Orc

As I think I've said before, one of the things that really bugs me about this kind of monster in AD&D is that they're carnivorous mammals who exist in large populations. In the real world carnivorous mammals outnumber the herbivores by at least thirty to one, so there shouldn't be enough of them to seriously threaten humans unless the orcs possess huge territories.

As we said in earlier threads, there could be a fabulously efficient source of meat for the orcs to feed upon, or the orcs themselves might have magically efficient metabolisms so they only need to eat a few ounces of flesh

a day, but they should say something to that effect, since it has interesting implications to the world of D&D.

Anyhows, I get around that in my campaign by saying orcs are omnivores, indeed they're more omnivorous than humans, being able to live of much poorer quality food. That's how they manage to survive in those wastelands.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

Yep, here they are at last - those green-skinned ugly pig-nosed ape creatures we know and love. As with all the iconic D&D races it's difficult to say anything new about them, though I'm sure you'll try, but here's a list of some matters of interest I spotted in the entry:

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Bring back the pig-headed orc! Or at least, have a variety of orcs with pig faces. It gives the AD&D orc something distinctive.

Hmm... maybe the the pig-faced orcs are half full orc, half swine - due the "orcs can breed with anything" trope extending slightly outside the hominid family (after all, there are a few biological similarities between humanoids and pigs, so throw in magical fertility and bestiality and maybe pig orc hybrids are viable). Such pig-orcs could be stupider and less disciplined (i.e. CE) than true orcs, but they breed in *litters* and are omnivorous and extremely omnivorous, making them excellent disposable troops.

As for the coarse hair, I think of them of being like a very hirsute human rather than actually furry. Imagine Robin Williams with a snout, and his hairy chest extending over the rest of his body!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?

I believe it is a typo, should be "for every *thirty* orcs". At least, that's how it is in the 1E MM, which makes sense statistically (with 1d8 hit dice you'll get an average of 4 leader/assistant types per 32 regular orcs).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

"If the orcs are not in their lair, there is a 20% chance they will be escorting a train of 1-6 carts and 10-60 slave bearers bringing supplies, loot, or ransom and tribute to their orc chief or a stronger orc tribe..." I've never used this and don't think I ever even noticed it in the entry. The idea of a baggage train is pretty cool; it's also an obvious hook for an adventure (bring back the womenfolk kidnapped for ransom and being carried in a baggage train to blahblah land....).

Used this a couple of times in my campaigns, both planned and as random encounters. (i.e. if I made a Wilderness encounter roll for orcs they were sometimes escorting such a caravan). I like the inference that the orcs are doing stuff with each other. Gives a sense of a living world.

Hmm, maybe it'd be nice having a random "what the goblinoids are doing table" for wandering monsters:

Escorting Caravan (goods, slaves, treasure to give to their chief / stronger rival)

Migrating (driven out of home, surplus population, exiled/fleeing after a failed coup)

Finding Food (hunting herd animals, foraging vegetation, fishing or so starving they are devouring everything vaguely edible they come across)

Raiding

War! Fully armed and armoured, with a supply train and possibly siege engines.

Other Religious pilgrimage, diplomatic mission, going to the amazon orc tribe for the mating season, "marrying" trip (e.g. buying/selling females) *et cetera*.

JRM

02-27-2009 07:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10035287)

As far as their alignment goes, as a Planescape GM I generally prefer orcs to be LE, in order to retain some of the setting material (orc wars in Acheron, most of the pantheon). More generally, though, I submit that orcs exhibit the alignment of whatever force is motivating and directing their energies. Left to their own devices, orcs are basically chaotic evil - but if controlled by a greater power (whether militarily as Saruman did or supernaturally as Sauron seems to) orcs can easily become lawful evil.

That's a nice idea, although it doesn't really fit my current conception of goblinoids as fully capable of cooperation and independent decision making. Maybe there are "slave breeds" of orcs who are bred to behave like this, or the Great Evil Force has developed a "Dominate Goblinoid Horde" ritual or spell.

The Last Conformist

02-27-2009 07:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?

It's Orcstadter's Law - there's always a third more orcs than you think there are, even after taking Orcstadter's Law into account.

Edivad

02-27-2009 08:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Why not Neutral Evil, as a medium between those two extremes? Yes, I know that the Monster manual never made them Neutral, but to me it makes sense:

while crude and savage, Orcs also seem to (roughly) understand the benefits of teamwork and having some sort of organization and hierarchy.

Being Neutral would also avoid them being too similar too Hobgoblins - and at the same time, because they're not Chaotic, they're not just smaller Ogres.

Of course, it all depends on 'what kind' of Orc you have in mind...there's the Hobgoblin-like, militarized Orc which has been already mentioned and the savage bloodthirsty rampaging barbarian Orc. Some settings (Warcraft's is the only one that comes to mind to me now) have Orcs as a somewhat noble warrior race, perhaps naturally violent but not malicious. This contrasts strongly with the traditional, iconic D&D orc...

Quote:

"Orcs have a reputation for cruelty that is deserved, but humans are just as capable of evil as orcs." I wonder if PETA girl had a hand in that sentence...

I think Tolkien may have had Orcs be 'degenerated' Elves... Perhaps Orcs could be the descendants of ancient humans who degenerated into savagery and cruelty so much that it actually physically changed them? Wouldn't be too original (degenerated races seem to be quite common in fiction), but still would explain some of the similarities between orcs and humans.

Sleeper

02-27-2009 08:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

*First, take a look at the description: "Orcs vary widely in appearance, as they frequently crossbreed with other species. In general, they resemble primitive humans with grey-green skin **covered with coarse hair**. Orcs have a slightly stooped posture, a low jutting forehead, and a snout instead of a nose, though comparisons between this facial feature and those of pigs are exaggerated and perhaps unfair." Notice the bit in bold? Are Orcs supposed to be covered in hair and I never realised??*

That never bothered me. What I don't like is the almost totally random colors of the various humanoid races. 2E orcs are grey-green. 1E orcs were brown or brownish green with a bluish sheen and pink snouts and ears. Hobgoblins were almost only in 1E, with dark reddish brown to gray black skin and bright red-orange to red faces and blue-red noses; in 2E, they're the same except the noses are blue or red. Goblins in both editions ranged from yellow to orange to deep red, though in 2E they're color-coded by tribe (which raises questions about exogamy and the genetic basis of coloration...). And that's not even including the outright silly ones, like the blue xvarts.

Did anybody ever actually picture the various humanoids in such garish colors?

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?

Typo. In first edition, it was "For every 30 orcs encountered there will be a leader and 3 assistants".

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

This category encompasses not just half-orc/half-humans but half-orc/half-anything (except elves); orc-goblins, orc-hobgoblins are said to be most common, but I wonder what orc-halfings or orc-dwarves would look like? Anyway, like Half-ogres they sometimes form their own communities on the outside of other societies, which I'd like to use in game sometime.

Speaking of favorite roles for orcs, the half-orc in D&D is typically portrayed as an outcast with a bad temper and dental problems (the standard PC), or as a smarter leader-type orc (shaman, witch-doctor, etc). That's not a terrible role, but I always preferred Tolkien's take. Sneaky infiltrators, who appear human enough to pass for human in a casual environment... but otherwise seem off. Spies, assassins. Some good roleplaying opportunities. Defectors, traitors, deep cover sleeper agents. Trying to blend into an alien culture. Very Cold War. Finding a fake pseudo-human village like the faux-Western towns Russia built and staffed to help train spies would be eerie.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035530)

As I think I've said before, one of the things that really bugs me about this kind of monster in AD&D is that they're carnivorous mammals who exist in large populations. In the real world carnivorous mammals outnumber the herbivores by at least thirty to one, so there shouldn't be enough of them to seriously threaten humans unless the orcs possess huge territories.

Never bothered me. In the real world, "barbarian" tribes often ate more meat than their civilized counterparts, partially explaining why barbarians were considered so formidable (more protein means taller and heavier). Many tribes lived in marginal lands, poorly suited to farming or agriculture. As a result, they lived by hunting and looting. And yet, civilization was usually a few shining pockets, while the rest of the world was swamped in darkness (well, not really, but not shiny civilization either). Go orcs.

And the carnivore/herbivore ratio is heavily dependent on the degree of homeothermy in the predator population. Permian fossil assemblages show a radically higher ratio than later periods. Orcs could be sluggish but deadly, like crocodiles and sharks.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035530)

Anyhows, I get around that in my campaign by saying orcs are omnivores, indeed they're more omnivorous than humans, being able to live of much poorer quality food. That's how they manage to survive in those wastelands.

Dominic Deegan, which is a bad webcomic until the Mary-Suism gets completely out of hand, had an interesting take:

Orcs have tusks. They're not fangs, they're not for eating flesh. They're for rooting out... well, roots. They're herbivores. And the culture draws heavily from the Plains Indians of North America.

JRM

02-27-2009 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035742)

Never bothered me. In the real world, "barbarian" tribes often ate more meat than their civilized counterparts, partially explaining why barbarians were considered so formidable (more protein means taller and heavier). Many tribes lived in marginal lands, poorly suited to farming or agriculture. As a result, they lived by hunting and looting. And yet, civilization was usually a few shining pockets, while the rest of the world was swamped in darkness (well, not really, but not shiny civilization either). Go orcs.

No, if my understanding of the real world is correct most tribal cultures which eat a lot of meat do so by maintaining large herds, not through hunting. They may live on land unsuited for agriculture but that doesn't prevent them pursuing a pastoral or nomadic herder lifestyle. Hunter/gatherer people tend to have a far lower population per unit area than D&D 'barbarian' tribes would indicate.

EDIT: Not to mention there are many cultures people called "barbarian" (e.g. Roman-era Britons) who did a lot of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035742)

And the carnivore/herbivore ratio is heavily dependent on the degree of homeothermy in the predator population. Cambrian fossil assemblages show a radically higher ratio than later periods. Orcs could be sluggish but deadly, like crocodiles and sharks.

I'm aware of that, but it wouldn't fit the observed facts: (a) Orcs are mammals, which are hot blooded to various degrees in the real world. (b) Orcs happily live in the full range of climates, they wouldn't like cold environments if they were ectothermic. (c) There is no mention of orcs being sluggish compared to other humanoids.

Hmm, although in reference to (c) there is much mention of Ogres being "lazy". Perhaps ogres are cooler blooded than standard humanoids. It partly explains their great size and fat, it's to help conserve the little heat their metabolisms generate, i.e. they're gigantothermic and poikilothermic.

Sleeper

02-27-2009 09:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035798)

No, if my understanding of the real world is correct most tribal cultures which eat a lot of meat do so by maintaining large herds, not through hunting. They may live on land unsuited for agriculture but that doesn't prevent them pursuing a pastoral or nomadic herder lifestyle. Hunter/gatherer people tend to have a far lower population per unit area than D&D 'barbarian' tribes would indicate.

I guess I've never pictured orcs as purely anthrophagus. There aren't a ton of species that survive purely by cannibalizing their close relatives. I didn't state it, but I always assumed they were either nomadic, hunting great herds of stench kow or rothe or what have you, or practiced animal husbandry (though it's never clear what animals they would have domesticated; sheep don't seem fitting). I always figured they were wicked human analogues, not bizarre alien monsters like xenomorphs or wasps.

The Last Conformist

02-27-2009 09:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035828)

[I assumed that orcs] practiced animal husbandry (though it's never clear what animals they would have domesticated; sheep don't seem fitting).

In the first two Warcraft games, they had pig farms, which I always felt was very appropriate.

GestaltBennie

02-27-2009 10:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

So here we are in Episode IV, and still the end remains far from sight. But we're enjoying ourselves so let's continue. And what an entry to continue on!

Orc

[]"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?*

The entry was mine. Sad to say, knowing this was a really important monster, I showed the write-up to about a dozen gamers and asked them to proof it. No one caught the mistake. ::sigh::

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Orcs. Is there a foe more instantly recognizable and used than the orc? I should think not. Yet, through most of my 2E gaming period, I barely used them. I much preferred hobgoblins and humans. But like other folks in this thread, the Lord of the Rings movies reminded me that orcs are made of pure awesome. And evil. Lots and lots of evil.

When I learned that the Professor had decided that orcs were elves, I realized that drow are pretty lame. Orcs are better dark elves than D&D's dark elves. They're a much better mirror to the elves; just by being lawful evil to the elves' chaotic good (although I did click "chaotic evil" in the poll) -- but add in the militarism, some industrialization, the raiding and raping, the shortened lifespans, the savagery of the average orc -- like I said, better dark elves than the dark elves. Orcs as fey -- hmmm, there's something there, I think.

The other thing about LoTR orcs is that there's no pig snout. I remember watching the D&D cartoon as a kid and wondering why there were Gamorrean Guards in the 'toon, until my brother explained, "They're orcs, stupid." At the time I thought it was cool, but at the time I was a silly child.

Still, even pig-snouted orcs are capable of bringing the awesome. One of the best D&D supplements ever (and one for BECM!) was the Orcs of Thar gazetteer, which not only delineated several tribes and sub-species of orcs and other humanoids (I still use red orcs and yellow orcs), but also presented an orcish city and tons of orcish NPCs, including old King Thar, a more interesting orc king than Obould Many Arrows will ever be. And I ran my first orc PCs from that gazetteer.

Oh, and since this is 2E, and I know there aren't many fans of it here but I still want to mention it: Spelljammer orcs. They're pretty similar generally to Warhammer 40K orcs, but then there are the Scro, which were Klingon-orcs who pretty much rocked, being more lawful than lawful and more evil than evil. Somehow, space made orcs smarter, and that made them much more dangerous.

The Last Conformist

02-27-2009 11:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Orcs of [Thar](#)? Now I have this image of the Bollywood version of The Lord of the Rings in my head ...

Sleeper

02-27-2009 11:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10035867)

In the first two Warcraft games, they had pig farms, which I always felt was very appropriate.

I like. Both indiscriminate eaters. The "good" races might develop a religious aversion to pork :). Also, boars are nasty. Orc braves hooting and hollering as they drive a herd of giant tusked pigs through the woods until they overrun a human caravan, is a great image.

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10036260)

When I learned that the Professor had decided that orcs were elves, I realized that drow are pretty lame. Orcs are better dark elves than D&D's dark elves.

Yes. Though they're not corrupted and twisted elves (though they are both fey), the d20 setting Midnight does an extensive riff on the idea of orcs being the anti-elves. The world has been conquered by the dark god Izrador and the armies of his chosen race, the orcs. The only bastion of hope left is the elven kingdom (some dwarven strongholds also hold out, but they're isolated and unable to cooperate). They're neither piggish nor green; they're grey skinned and obviously inspired more by Peter Jackson's interpretation. No half-human orcs or elves either; the fey races can't interbreed with humans.

Mr. Teapot

02-28-2009 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssiuss (Post 10034733)

My solution: make them trollkin. Make them feared. Make them the size of a half-ogre, with beady eyes and sharklike jaws.

I've always gotten better results by humanizing orcs than by dehumanizing them. Dehumanizing them pushes them further into "faceless enemy just there to be killed" territory, which D&D already encourages enough and already has a ton of monsters to do.

Making orcs and actual species of thinking (if crude and violent) creatures is more interesting though. Give them genuine motivations. (Why are the orcs invading the dwarven lands? Not because they're evil or just like war, but because they have been pushed southwards after a local disaster and need resources to survive.) Give them personalities, culture and a history. NPCs worth knowing. Then the players and PCs will need to decide if orcs really deserve to be killed, or if they can be worked with. and even if they decide to kill the orcs, the orcs are meaningful NPCs who added some flavor to the game.

Wakboth

02-28-2009 01:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10034521)

[]First, take a look at the description: "Orcs vary widely in appearance, as they frequently crossbreed with other species. In general, they resemble primitive humans with grey-green skin**covered with coarse hair**. Orcs have a slightly stooped posture, a low jutting forehead, and a snout instead of a nose, though comparisons between this facial feature and those of pigs are exaggerated and perhaps unfair." Notice the bit in bold? Are Orcs supposed to be covered in hair and I never realised??*

I always thought it just meant they're hairy, not that they have fur or something like that.

Quote:

[*]Orcs in 2nd edition are Lawful Evil militarists, rather than Chaotic Evil brutes. I've actually always preferred them that way, even if it does see them creep into the Hobgoblin sphere of influence. It's probably because "Many orc tribes have waged wars for decades and have developed a frightening efficiency with battle tactics", which is more of a Lawful Evil sounding creature than a Chaotic Evil one.

Me, I think CE orcs are better (in part just because they don't compete with hobgoblins for the role of militarist humanoid). And that'd give us LE hobgoblins, NE goblins and CE orcs. (Gnolls, as much as I like them, aren't one of the Big Three humanoid races.)

Quote:

[*]"For every three orcs encountered, there will be a leader and three assistants. These orcs will have 8 hit points each, being the meanest and strongest in the group." Is that a mis-type? For every three orcs encountered there will be a leader and three assistants?

I'm convinced that it's a typo, and should be "for every thirty orcs".
[/quote]

Also, I've never, ever liked the "pig-face orc" idea, and I'm kind of glad that the orcs in D&D have moved away from that. (Thankfully, they haven't embraced the Warhammer/WoW style of big green orcs entirely, either.)

JRM

02-28-2009 01:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035828)

I guess I've never pictured orcs as purely anthrophagus. There aren't a ton of species that survive purely by cannibalizing their close relatives. I didn't state it, but I always assumed they were either nomadic, hunting great herds of stench kow or rothe or what have you, or practiced animal husbandry (though it's never clear what animals they would have domesticated; sheep don't seem fitting). I always figured they were wicked human analogues, not bizarre alien monsters like xenomorphs or wasps.

Pardon? I never proposed orcs were pure man-eaters, nor did anyone else on this thread that I recall, just that my preference was for omnivorous orcs as opposed to carnivores. I did say I liked the idea of man-eating ogres, but even then I didn't say they could only eat men.

(As an aside, in my campaign some orcs did include humanoids amongst their diet, but their most common victims was *other orcs*. One of my players had a half-orc character who developed a taste for "orc pies" who was rather distressed when I revealed the pies were made from orcs as well as by orcs.)

JRM

02-28-2009 01:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10036260)

Still, even pig-snouted orcs are capable of bringing the awesome. One of the best D&D supplements ever (and one of the best BECMI) was the Orcs of Thar gazetteer, which not only delineated several tribes and sub-species of orcs and other humanoids (I still use red orcs and yellow orcs), but also presented an orcish city and tons of orcish NPCs, including old King Thar, a more interesting orc king than Obould Many Arrows will ever be. And I ran my first orc PCs from that gazetteer.

Oh yes, the Orcs of Thar is a great supplement, indeed, many of the BECMI Gazetteers have good gaming material.

My favourite bit in the module was Thar's army manual, which included gems such as (I'll have to paraphrase, not having it immediately to hand):

Test for the orc sergeant. Tie the candidate to a wild boar and send them into the wilderness. If the orc does not come back, he failed. If the orc walks back by himself, he does not earn the promotion. If the orc comes back dragging the boar behind him, he earns the promotion to sergeant. If the orc comes back riding the boar, make him a captain.

JRM

02-28-2009 01:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Edivad (Post 10035731)

I think Tolkien may have had Orcs be 'degenerated' Elves... Perhaps Orcs could be the descendants of ancient humans who degenerated into savagery and cruelty so much that it actually physically changed them? Wouldn't be too original (degenerated races seem to be quite common in fiction), but still would explain some of the similarities between orcs and humans.

I've read an article by one of Tolkien's sons that said JRR changed his mind on that issue, making orcs corrupted men instead. If I remember it correctly, it said Tolkien decided he didn't like the idea that elves were corruptible in that fashion.

Chevelle

02-28-2009 02:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10034549)

Micromanaging = Lawful Evil

I wish this was Boardgame Geek so I could give you a thumbs up.

Sleeper

02-28-2009 06:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10036826)

Pardon? I never proposed orcs were pure man-eaters, nor did anyone else on this thread that I recall, just that my preference was for omnivorous orcs as opposed to carnivores. I did say I liked the idea of man-eating ogres, but even then I didn't say they could only eat men.

May not have been your intent, but your previous post could be interpreted either way. I initially read it that way, but I can see how you might have meant otherwise.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035530)

As I think I've said before, one of the things that really bugs me about this kind of monster in AD&D is that they're carnivorous mammals who exist in large populations. In the real world carnivorous mammals outnumber the herbivores by at least thirty to one, so there shouldn't be enough of them to seriously threaten humans unless the orcs possess huge territories.

YojimboC

02-28-2009 06:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10036384)

Yes. Though they're not corrupted and twisted elves (though they are both fey), the d20 setting Midnight does an extensive riff on the idea of orcs being the anti-elves. The world has been conquered by the dark god Izrador and the armies of his chosen race, the orcs. The only bastion of hope left is the elven kingdom (some dwarven strongholds also hold out, but they're isolated and unable to cooperate). They're neither piggy nor green; they're grey skinned and obviously inspired more by Peter Jackson's interpretation. No half-human orcs or elves either; the fey races can't interbreed with humans.

Oh yeah, Midnight orcs are awesome. I particularly like the dworgs, the half-orc/dwarf crossbreeds. And I think the orcs and dwarves share an origin as fey earth spirits in that setting.

Actually, I just like the credit the orcs are given in Midnight as the end-all be-all of evil humanoids. I think there are goblins and maybe giants in there somewhere, but the orcs are pretty much it for servants of the evil forces.

JRM

02-28-2009 09:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10038029)

May not have been your intent, but your previous post could be interpreted either way. I initially read it that way, but I can see how you might have meant otherwise.

Oh right, I guess you could read that post as meaning carnivorous orcs eating herbivorous humans, although my intention was more meat eating tribe competing for territory with far more numerous omnivorous tribe. Still, orcs probably do eat humans. Our own species are known to be occasional cannibals, so an evil/amoral monstrous version of us like an orc would likely be more prone to cannibalism and anthropagy, but that doesn't mean they only eat humans.

EDIT: Oh and I've just noticed that "about this kinf on monster" in my post. "Kinf?" what on Earth is a kinf, I'd better check my Fiend Folio, sounds like it belongs there. Oh well, I'll just have to correct that typo in post #7.

YojimboC

02-28-2009 09:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Which is why I voted chaotic evil. 3E orcs are basically the Reavers from Firefly/Serenity. They'll kill you, rape you, skin you, and eat you and not necessarily in that order.

Kakita Kojiro

02-28-2009 09:38 AM

You know, with our recent discussion on ogres and orcs and interbreeding hijinks... let us remember back to the "Mammal" entry: [Losel](#).

So, losels are orc + baboon crossbreeds, created by someone or other on Greyhawk from what I recall (luz, maybe?). One would like to think that they are "crossbreeds" in the same way that an owlbear or duckbunny is... but if not, it isn't the ogres with the whackiest crossbreeding heritage.

noisms

02-28-2009 12:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by GestaltBennie (Post 10035989)

The entry was mine. Sad to say, knowing this was a really important monster, I showed the write-up to about a dozen gamers and asked them to proof it. No one caught the mistake. ::sigh::

Wow, really? How many others did you write?

GestaltBennie

02-28-2009 02:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10039255)
Wow, really? How many others did you write?

My assignment on this project was Merman through Myconid, and Orc through Rhemoraz.

JRM

02-28-2009 04:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by GestaltBennie (Post 10039572)
My assignment on this project was Merman through Myconid, and Orc through Rhemoraz.

Excellent! I hope you can give us some interesting "war stories" about editing those monsters* and the development of the Monstrous Manual.

*In several senses of the word "monster".;)

noisms

02-28-2009 05:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by GestaltBennie (Post 10039572)
My assignment on this project was Merman through Myconid, and Orc through Rhemoraz.

Well let me first say that any ribbing we (especially I) give the monsters in these threads is entirely done from a position of great affection. The Monstrous Manual was my favourite book ever between the ages of about 11 and 14, and still ranks as the best fantasy bestiary ever created in my opinion.

If you did Me-My and Or-Rhe, that means you did some really nice entries - particular favourites of mine being the Crimson Death Mist, the Rakshasa, the Phantom and the Otyugh.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10039793)

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If you did Me-My and Or-Rhe, that means you did some really nice entries - particular favourites of mine being the Crimson Death Mist, the Rakshasa, the Phantom and the Otyugh.

I'll back you up there noism. Most of the monster-ribbing we've been doing is on a conceptual/aesthetic level rather than an editorial one.

There's nothing to be ashamed about the editing of the Monstrous Manual*, it doesn't have any egregious typographical and grammatical errors, admittedly some of the wording is a bit confusing but I'd blame that on the writers rather than the editors, I don't expect a RPG editor to redraft the rules for clarity. Plus the layout is nice for the period.

*Unless you include the editors not noticing the Invisible Stalker's illustration was missing.:p

EmperorSeth

02-28-2009 10:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10038738)

Which is why I voted chaotic evil. 3E orcs are basically the Reavers from Firefly/Serenity. They'll kill you, rape you, skin you, and eat you and not necessarily in that order.

Orcs as Reavers? Huh, I never thought of that before. That would quickly put the interest back into them. Now, I'm not so sure that's accurate by the rules, though; the MM only listed them as "often" chaotic evil, not even getting the "usually" that the other humanoids get. Between that and worlds like Eberron, I assumed that 3rd ed orcs were more of the Proud Warrior Guy or even the Misunderstood Natural Guy schtick the lizardfolk seem to get.

Thane of Fife

02-28-2009 11:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Out of curiosity, how many people actually used those percentage listings of weapons? I can recall using them for deciding what kinds of weapons an orc leader might have, but most of my uses of orcs would be something like:

20 orcs with short swords, shields, and studded leather

rather than any sort of mix of halberds and glaives and axes and such.

Also interesting is that orcs are good miners, which is something we don't often see of them.

Zarithar

03-01-2009 01:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

This discussion of orc diet seems sort of odd. I had always pictured them as opportunists, eating whatever was at hand, but preferring meat of some sort whether it be horse, human, dog, or beef. They wouldn't turn their nose up at a loaf of bread or a pie either I would imagine.

As for alignment, I've always had a soft spot for orcs and goblinoids in general... and while they do tend towards evil, there are doubtless exceptions to the rule. Conceptually, my favorite orcs are those from the Warhammer universe (quite chaotic and evil) and those from Warcraft (evil when under demonic influence, wild and savage... and not evil, when freed from that taint).

YojimboC

03-01-2009 01:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10040252)

Orcs as Reavers? Huh, I never thought of that before. That would quickly put the interest back into them. Now, I'm not so sure that's accurate by the rules, though; the MM only listed them as "often" chaotic evil, not even getting them "usually" that the other humanoids get. Between that and worlds like Eberron, I assumed that 3rd ed orcs were more of the Proud Warrior Guy or even the Misunderstood Natural Guy schtick the lizardfolk seem to get.

Eberron aside, where the orcs are clearly some kind of Native American analogue. most of the D&D settings (I'm aware of) have full on evil orcs. I think the entry got modified in 3.5, when WotC decided to go with "tendencies" (something I think was included to allow Eberron's reworking of orcs, among other things), but if I recall correctly, 3.0 orcs are chaotic evil and that's that. Even accounting for some measure of sliding on the alignment scale, that means most non-chaotic evil orcs are going to end up being chaotic neutral or neutral evil; still bad neighbors no matter how you cut it.

Trying to explain how a culture of chaotic evil creatures could possibly work, the only thing I could think of was the Reavers. The orcs are basically a society of serial killers, who band together out of a combination of mutual cowardice and aggression.

If you have a chance, check out the Kingdoms of Kalamar sourcebook, *Fury in the Wastelands*. Topknotch stuff. Between that and watching/re-reading the Lord of the Rings, I realized orcs were the coolest, most monstrous, and brutal humanoid villains in the MM. As a player, I enjoy killing them, and as a DM, I enjoy throwing them at my players.

Edit: Also, rules schmules. If it sounds like a good idea, run with it.

Hellzon

03-01-2009 01:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Morrowind Orcs are.. interesting. Another iteration of the "Noble Warrior", though.

Mr. Teapot

03-01-2009 02:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zarithar (Post 10040640)

*They wouldn't turn their nose up at a loaf of bread or a **pie** either I would imagine.*

That raises all sorts of questions about why [the orc hasn't eaten the pie already](#).

GestaltBennie

03-01-2009 03:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10039697)

Excellent! I hope you can give us some interesting "war stories" about editing those monsters and the development of the Monstrous Manual.*

**In several senses of the word "monster".;)*

It's been twenty years, and my brain got fried long ago working in computer game development (extended hundred hour work weeks are worse than acid, man!), but I'll say what I can.

Design on the MM was farmed out to Bruce Heard's favorite stable of freelancers, of which I was fortunate enough to be one. The actual selection of monsters was done by TSR, monsters which were considered "lame" were excluded with some glee (later I talked with one ex-TSR staffer who bemoaned that the Annuals put them back in). Deadlines were tight, as per usual with TSR in that period. A lot, or all, of my editing was done by Jon Pickens, who I remember as a real stickler, but probably deserves credit for the quality being as high as it was. I don't remember all of the design issues; I had some problem with wanting to transform damages into base weapon damage plus strength bonus, an approach later taken by 3e, but I was told to conform more to 1e damage standards.

The project was fun, but the details could get repetitive; I remember Jon moaning on one manuscript about being tired of seeing yet another note on the use of monster parts, a criticism which was probably accurate. The more I was allowed to stretch my wings in development, the more fun I had. The mind flayer was easily my favorite entry -- recognizing the Cthulhuesque elements of Gary's original, I figured making them amphibians and giving them elder brains would reinforce that tone.

DMH

03-01-2009 03:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

You are the creator of the elder brain? Cool! I am not a fan of illithids but the idea of the elder brain is just so interesting.

JRM

03-01-2009 05:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10040817)

That raises all sorts of questions about why the orc hasn't eaten the pie already.

The answer to that one's obvious. The orc's there to *guard* the pie, not *eat* it. The tribal chief would have that orc's head if the pie crust was so much as nibbled.

JRM

03-01-2009 05:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10040370)

Out of curiosity, how many people actually used those percentage listings of weapons? I can recall using them for deciding what kinds of weapons an orc leader might have, but most of my uses of orcs would be something like:

Sheepishly raises hand. I'd quite often use the weapon ratios if I had to whip up a tribe of humanoids for my party to ~~meaningfully interact with~~ slaughter mercilessly. I did tend to swap a few categories, just for variety or to suit the scenario. Often that was to give them more missile weapons, which many of the default humanoid weapon mixes were a little short of.

JRM

03-01-2009 05:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Well you deserve Kudos for the elder brain, I've never used one but the idea has *ahem* stuck in my mind.

The weapon+strength bit was interesting to, since there are some 2E (and 1E) humanoid monsters that use it, but many more that don't. Gets rather confusing, especially when a few of the monster got strength bonuses to hit as well.

noisms

03-01-2009 01:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by GestaltBennie (Post 10041018)

I don't remember all of the design issues; I had some problem with wanting to transform damages into base weapon damage plus strength bonus, an approach later taken by 3e, but I was told to conform more to 1e damage standards.

If only you'd had your way. That's one thing that I always thought should have been changed.

Quote:

The project was fun, but the details could get repetitive; I remember Jon moaning on one manuscript about being tired of seeing yet another note on the use of monster parts, a criticism which was probably accurate.

No way, the monster-parts-usage bits are a lot of fun. I've remarked on a number of occasions that a Complete Guide to Using Monster Body Parts for Armour would have been both possible and worth buying.

Wakboth

03-01-2009 05:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10042608)

No way, the monster-parts-usage bits are a lot of fun. I've remarked on a number of occasions that a Complete Guide to Using Monster Body Parts for Armour would have been both possible and worth buying.

Ah, the Combat Taxidermists & Monster Ranchers campaign!

noisms

03-02-2009 11:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Otyugh

It is easiest to describe Otyughs as the creature in the rubbish disposal unit thing in *Star Wars*; I'm not sure if that was the direct inspiration but the concept is pretty close. Otyughs live under dung heaps and eat lots of, well, dung; they beat you up with tentacles and carry fatal or debilitating diseases (though what 'debilitating' means is not detailed). There is a larger, nastier and tougher variant called the Neo-Otyugh.

Otyughs are one of those monsters which seem specifically designed to ambush adventurers in a dungeon - like Piercers, Lurkers, Mimics and the like. It's hard to imagine one living in any other setting, except perhaps a sewer. I wonder if there could be some kind of secret civilisation of the things living beneath the surface of some giant metropolis.

The other use I can think of for Otyughs is as a kind of watchdog for a tribe of goblins or kobolds; in return for warning of intruders and/or killing them, the Otyugh gets as much dung and offal as it can eat. Sounds like a great deal to me!

Inyssius

03-02-2009 12:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Apparently, otyughs have become *the* low-level aberration.

And *the* "sewer thing". If it's not rats, it's between one and four otyughs.

ESkemp

03-02-2009 12:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10046445)

The other use I can think of for Otyughs is as a kind of watchdog for a tribe of goblins or kobolds; in return for warning of intruders and/or killing them, the Otyugh gets as much dung and offal as it can eat. Sounds like a great deal to me!

I like the idea of them being "bioengineered" by the life-reshaping culture/race of your choice (my personal preference is elves) for that specific purpose. They dispose of your garbage, you don't have to waste any serious resources feeding them, and as you note, they also make trainable watchdogs. And given that sneaking into places via the sewers is a time-honored tradition, why not have specialized sewer watch-beasts since people will be coming in through there anyway?

YojimboC

03-02-2009 01:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I like the otyugh. Like the gelatinous cube and the carrion crawler, it exists largely to explain how dungeons remain clean and pretty in between adventurer's raids, but they're also a neat addition to magical world ecology.

I think they're a natural for urban adventures, to be found in sewers and trash heaps and such. And not necessarily in an aggressive manner, but simply as a part of set dressing.

noisms

03-02-2009 01:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10046757)

I like the otyugh. Like the gelatinous cube and the carrion crawler, it exists largely to explain how dungeons remain clean and pretty in between adventurer's raids, but they're also a neat addition to magical world ecology.

I think they're a natural for urban adventures, to be found in sewers and trash heaps and such. And not necessarily in an aggressive manner, but simply as a part of set dressing.

You could almost imagine one sitting in a corner somewhere in a castle, disposing of the waste. Like one of the weird beings in Jabba's palace.

DMH

03-02-2009 07:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Since the neos are smarter than humans, I wonder what they think about all day long.

noisms

03-02-2009 08:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10047670)

Since the neos are smarter than humans, I wonder what they think about all day long.

Maybe they savour dung like we do wine, and just spend all day in hedonistic enjoyment of all the various flavours.

JRM

03-03-2009 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10047734)

Maybe they savour dung like we do wine, and just spend all day in hedonistic enjoyment of all the various flavours.

Now I'm imagining a couple of otyughs lying in a rapturous daze after a visit from their 'dealer', any one turns to the other to say "Wow, that was some really great s**t".

Come to think of it, thinks otyughs are sapient language-users wouldn't they have a wide vocabulary to describe different kinds of dung and rubbish, possibly based on taste, texture and nutritional value?

I'm reminded of a Jack Vance short story I once read, whose title temporarily escapes me, which was a science fiction murder mystery where the culprit turned out to be an alien who ingested sewage and "savoured" bacteria. The detective investigating the murder discovered the victim had discovered someone had been embezzling, and of the suspects with access to the account the sewer-alien was the only one spending beyond his means - he'd been mail ordering packets of rare, and in some cases deadly, bacteria to add to his intestinal fauna.

Getting back to otyughs, I imagine they have an integrated part in the cultures of many large civilizations in D&D. Having otyughs under your city or castle may be highly desirable, since they help protect you from plague and outbreaks of vermin, as well as the sewer-busting enemies previously mentioned. Being neutral in alignment, they can work for both good and evil creatures without moral conflicts. They could also alert their "suppliers" of problems under their feet, or in some cases be considered official employees of the civil engineering department. I'm imagining an otyugh wearing a safety helmet poking its eyestalk out of a manhole and shouting "Oy, Pete! There's subsidence in west sewer eight, better get a crew down here."

That opens up some possibilities for otyughs in a D&D game beyond "random menace in the sewer" or "cesspool guardian". Maybe the players want to find something that got washed into a storm drain, and the best way to go about this is to find the local otyugh? More amusingly (to me, anyway) there's a city that wants the party to recruit an neo-otyugh to help them with their new sewers, but there are rivals who also desire its services so they have to compete to offer the otyugh the highest quality crap to persuade it to pick their job offer.

Sleeper

03-03-2009 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've said it before, but I really love the concept. A monster build specifically to explain why the average faux-medieval fantasy world has modern-seeming hygiene and sanitation and isn't just [acrap sack world](#). I love the magical and social engineering that it implies. That an otyugh can make an effective guard, engineer, ambush predator, or an odd sage or detective (after all, digging through dumpsters is a standard investigative technique and may be the best way to get a feel for a city),* is just a bonus. I could also imagine a world where, for their help in sanitation and fighting plagues and diseases, they are considered holy. Like the cow in India, sacred and untouchable.

They're also well designed. Huge, lumbering body for ingesting the relatively nutrient poor offal suggests the body is primarily an elaborate digestive system, like a huge furnace (similar to many large herbivores). Eyes on stalks are very useful for hiding in the flow of waste, and for peeping out of its environment into the city streets. Tentacles, for bringing the food to them from all the hidden crannies without having to be tiny and built like a rat. And those limbs are spatulate and rough at the ends, like sharkskin, for more thorough cleansing.

* Imagine a nexus, a magical locus. Like an Underdark Sargasso sea under a maelstrom, but instead of sea monsters and undead pirates and lost treasure ships, it's the fantasy version of a landfill. Where all the garbage from a dozen different races goes to rot. Miles and miles of discarded toys, scraps of food, (in?)human waste, and the assorted detritus produced whenever lots and lots of elves or dwarves or gnolls get together. In the center, built under the largest single pile, is the center of otyugh civilization. The Library. A collection of written materials of various kinds (only those that can survive liquid, of course), but more importantly samples and collections. Some painstakingly restored. Half are pure pop culture drivel, underwear from great heroes, hair products used by wicked stepmothers, that kind of thing. But the other half chronicles the sweeping flow and drift of style and fashion, the history of the world. To know the world, you have to seek it's underbelly, or rather, the leavings of the underbelly. These are the neo-otyugh; not a new breed, but simply better-fed and better-educated.

Or, imagine a film-noir detective story. With glamorous dames, gangsters, and of a course a tough and persistent hard-drinking PI with ready fists as a protagonist. A story of right and wrong, because among all the sordid and distressing happenings, our hero is a gem in the rough, with a glittering sense of honor hidden beneath a trenchcoat. Except our PI is an otyugh whose rough fists are actually abrasive sandpaper-like tentacles. Who uses discarded scraps to piece together the puzzle, snags clues with elongated snapping arms, and guzzles bottles of rotgut urine.

demiurge1138

03-03-2009 02:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sleeper, that Otyugh PI is made of win.

I'm currently DMing a game that got otyugh-heavy for a while, and two facts about otyughs were decided by my players, seemingly by committee. I had no input.

1) Otyughs, due to their low Intelligence score, obsession with food and playful demeanor, talk like LOLcats.

2) Otyughs do not secrete waste like other animals--otherwise, sewers would just be full of otyugh leavings. Instead, their highly efficient metabolisms excrete nothing but a fine solid powder and pure oxygen. This explains why sewers are so liveable in D&D, rather than being full of asphyxiating toxic gasses.

Unfortunately, I hate the mechanical design of otyughs in 3rd Edition, my game of choice. They're big grapple monsters that are no stronger than a human, and they're woefully over-CRed.

YojimboC

03-03-2009 03:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Just looking over the entry now... and I didn't realize that even otyughs were (low to average) intelligent. And telepathic!

That means unions or guilds. And strikes! And what are the otyughs striking for?

What about deals with the Thieves Guild or Assassin's Guild? In exchange for... something... otyughs co-operate with the local underworld. Need to duck lawmen by jumping into a sewer? Otyughs lumber by to cover your escape. Need to dump some ill-gotten gains down a privy in order to throw the guard off your scent? Otyughs will recover the goods and them to you (cleaning, sadly, is your responsibility). And so on.

Of course, negotiating with these beings is going to be an adventure in itself.

Belchion

03-03-2009 03:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10049181)

In exchange for... something... otyughs co-operate with the local underworld.

I just find it difficult what to offer something that eats faeces and lives in a sewer. Perhaps the dung of some exotic animals otyughs consider delicious - dragon or gryphon poop or so.

JRM

03-03-2009 05:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10049181)

Just looking over the entry now... and I didn't realize that even otyughs were (low to average) intelligent. And telepathic!

That means unions or guilds. And strikes! And what are the otyughs striking for?

Well, while normal union workers strike because they're being treated like excrement, otyughs strike because they're not being treated with excrement.

When you have a bunch of stinking tentacled monsters marching in front of your house waving placards and chanting "What do we want - crap! When do we want it - now!" (chanting into your mind remember, since they're telepathic), it'd take a strong will to keep on sending your waste to that new incinerator.

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10049181)

What about deals with the Thieves Guild or Assassin's Guild? In exchange for... something... otyughs co-operate with the local underworld. Need to duck lawmen by jumping into a sewer? Otyughs lumber by to cover your escape. Need to dump some ill-gotten gains down a privy in order to throw the guard off your scent? Otyughs will recover the goods and them to you (cleaning, sadly, is your responsibility). And so on.

Not to mention that perennial problem assassins have of disposing of the body, made even worse in a world with *resurrection* and *speak with dead* spells. An otyugh is tailor made to make such a problem disappear.

Thane of Fife

03-03-2009 07:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I had never realized that otyughs had quite so much potential for comedy gold.

I do not think that I shall ever be able to take that page of the Monstrous Manual seriously again.

JRM

03-03-2009 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10050303)

I had never realized that otyughs had quite so much potential for comedy gold.

I do not think that I shall ever be able to take that page of the Monstrous Manual seriously again.

Glad you enjoyed it.

Now I couldn't help coming up with another couplet for the Otyugh Sewer Worker Union's protest chants...

"What do we want? Crap!"

"When do we want it? Now!"

"Why are we wai-ting?"

"Cause you're not de-fe-ca-ting!"

:eek:

Wakboth

03-03-2009 07:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10050303)

I had never realized that otyughs had quite so much potential for comedy gold.

What did you expect from a critter called "Oh, t'- eeuugh!" :D

JRM

03-03-2009 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10048918)

These are the neo-otyugh; not a new breed, but simply better-fed and better-educated

Now while I can understand the desire to make otyughs and neo-otyughs the same species, since having two different lifeforms occupying an identical evolutionary niche and habitat is problematic, there are enough differences between the two in morphology and capabilities (especially intellectual) that they could easily be different species.

However, they both speak/sign the same language, which makes it very unlikely that they're not the same species.

Maybe the clue is in the "neo-". Otyughs are the original form, the low-sapient dominant lifeform of an obscure prime material world filled with stinking, detritus filled swamps. A plane-spanning ancient civilization noticed their potential for solving their sewage problem, and uplifted them into useful members of civil society we know today as Neo-Otyughs, literally the "new" otyughs.

Unfortunately, the lifeshaping was imperfect and neo-otyughs do not always breed true, often producing otyugh throwbacks instead of more neo-otyughs.

Or it could just be down to diet: a regulat otyugh just didn't have a good enough dungheap to fully develop its mind and body. Meaning neo-otyughs aren't a true-breeding "offshoot" of the otyugh, but otyughs are a stunted and dim-witted form of neo-otyugh.

DMH

03-03-2009 08:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10052683)

Or it could just be down to diet: a regulat otyugh just didn't have a good enough dungheap to fully develop its mind and body. Meaning neo-otyughs aren't a true-breeding "offshoot" of the otyugh, but otyughs are a stunted and dim-witted form of neo-otyugh.

Why not take this a bit farther and say that neos come from base otyughs that have eaten the waste of powerful magical critters like dragons? For DMs who have the time, they could come up with different varieties (in 3.X that would be via templates) due to diet.

Inyssius

03-03-2009 08:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10052700)

Why not take this a bit farther and say that neos come from base otyughs that have eaten the waste of powerful magical critters like dragons?

Wow. You know what? That is **literally** the **only** dragon part or byproduct that I have never seen mentioned in a utilitarian or mystical context.

Huh.

DMH

03-03-2009 08:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Your sarcasm is unbecoming and dragons were the first example to come to mind. I could have said the sewer version of mudmen, dead oozes, bits of undead or flesh golems, waste of aboleths or illithids or even demonic radiation. There aren't a lot of creatures that could end up in a sewer, but there are enough.

Inyssius

03-03-2009 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

No, no, I was being totally serious. I was genuinely taken aback for a second there, not having looked at it from that angle before (augh eew brainbleach me not *that* angle). I actually like your idea.

DMH

03-03-2009 09:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Okay, cool. I have never used gulguthra* before but I have tried to come up with as many sources of mutation in D&D for use with Gamma World 4e mutations. Dragon parts and waste is somewhere in that list.

*Which name is better for otyughs? I find gulguthra easier to spell and pronounce.

Wakboth

03-03-2009 10:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10052731)

*Wow. You know what? That is **literally** the **only** dragon part or byproduct that I have never seen mentioned in a utilitarian or mystical context.*

Heh. I once toyed with the idea that dragons eat practically anything, including rocks, and metabolize almost everything except noble metals and magical residue, which they excrete as gold, silver and gems. :D

JRM

03-03-2009 10:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10052731)

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10052700)

Why not take this a bit farther and say that neos come from base otyughs that have eaten the waste of powerful magical critters like dragons? For DMs who have the time, they could come up with different varieties (in 3.X they would be via templates) due to diet.

*Wow. You know what? That is **literally** the **only** dragon part or byproduct that I have never seen mentioned in*

a utilitarian or mystical context.

Hmm, I clearly recall reading mention of dragon dung in fantasy books and RPGs, but can't remember were. That's going to bother me now, unless I can think of their title(s).

Anyhows, I was thinking the waste from magical creatures or laboratories could be a key element of the diet to create neo-otyughs, but didn't want to restrict myself. Perhaps they just need a really big pile of crap to get enough nutrient to grow to neo-otyugh size.

JRM

03-03-2009 10:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10052866)
Which name is better for otyughs? I find gulguthra easier to spell and pronounce.

I prefer otyugh. That's the original name, and I prefer the sound of it to gulguthra which (if I recall correctly) is a Forgotten Realms name for the monster.

Mr. Teapot

03-03-2009 11:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10052866)
**Which name is better for otyughs? I find gulguthra easier to spell and pronounce.*

I've never seen or heard that name for an otyugh. A brief Google search shows it in the title on an Ed Greenwood written "Ecology of..." article, which goes along with it suggested as a Forgotten Realms thing. If I ever use an intelligent Otyugh in a game, it might get named Gulguthra.

I do prefer the regular otyughs being of animal intelligence or so (like you get in 4e), since as shown sentient otyughs are kinda silly. Maybe regular otyughs aren't sentient, but neo-otyughs are. Split the difference, as it were.

Kakita Kojiro

03-03-2009 11:53 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10046445)
... Otyughs live under dung heaps and eat lots of, well, dung; they beat you up with tentacles and carry fatal or

debilitating diseases (though what 'debilitating' means is not detailed).

Presumably, it means that you are debilitated from having to poop too much.

Did anyone think differently? I mean, this is pretty much the archetype of the "now, it is time for poop jokes" monster. Never wanted to use them, because I never wanted my game to grind to a halt while everyone made their best coprophagy jokes.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10052866)

**Which name is better for otyughs? I find gulguthra easier to spell and pronounce.*

I just can't understand the appeal of having an unpronouncable name as an alternative to their already-unpronouncable name.

Particularly inasmuch as, in-gameworld, I'd have to believe there'd be a much simpler, more common, and probably scatological name for the things.

JRM

03-03-2009 11:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10053420)

I've never seen or heard that name for an otyugh. A brief Google search shows it in the title on an Ed Greenwood written "Ecology of..." article, which goes along with it suggested as a Forgotten Realms thing. If I ever use an intelligent Otyugh in a game, it might get named Gulguthra.

I do prefer the regular otyughs being of animal intelligence or so (like you get in 4e), since as shown sentient otyugh: are kinda silly. Maybe regular otyughs aren't sentient, but neo-otyughs are. Split the difference, as it were.

Yes, I was thinking of that Dragon article, which was set in the Realms like most of Mr Greenwood's ecology articles. I'll pull out my copy of the Dragon Magazine Archive and see whether Ed's interpretation has any interesting tidbits.

EDIT: It's Dragon #96 pages 20-22, for those who're interested.

Monsieur Meuble

03-04-2009 04:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The Othyug strike ? At first, no one cared. In the first part of it, they tried to stop eating dungs, but it didn't last for more than five minutes. Then the leader made his goons walk in the streets and throw craps everywhere, craps they almost immediately licked clean (actually making the street cleaner). They were doing it each day without any reaction by the Establishment until the Food Merchant Guild hired the PCs because, well, the food that was crapped then licked

by the striking othyugs is arguably cleaner and healthier than it was (othyug saliva is actually some kind of organic bleach...), but it's hard to find a good marketing spin on "this apple was smeared with shit then a dung-eating aberration liked it", so they had to hire some dudes specialized in the treatment of funky fauna to resolve this problem.

Of course, the leader of the strike, a Neo-Othyug, is waiting eagerly for humanoid negotiators (the moment the group go down the sewers, two othyug with a panel where is crudely written "dis wai, plz" appears and escort the PCs) (and I like the concept of othyug speaking common in lolspeak) and quickly exposes its demands.

1°) A diet richer in fibers for the city dwellers. This point exists essentially to be refused and make the other demands seems more reasonable.

2°) A modicum of waste sorting. Organic wastes on one side, other wastes on the other. Because, well, just the other day, a bunch of young ones found this (it waves about the half-eaten corpse of the Local Ruler, you know, the one the PCs saw, like, a couple of hours in the Local Palace, twirling his mustache and adjusting its face...) and began chomping on it and one of them swallowed this (it throws on the table a small sword emblazoned with the logo of Your Favorite Antagonist Group) that was embedded in the middle of the food. It perforated its stomach and is now between life and death, because, well, we know how to disinfect a wound, but we suck at suturing one. Magical healing ? Yeah, we heard about it, but... we will come back to it later.

3°) A little bit of help to fight against the undead. The local university of magic and the shitload of Evil Groups in town just keep releasing or stocking them in the sewers and they are... confusing. They smell like food, taste like food and the more common ones behave initially like food. Then they get all fighty and killy and punchy, sometime after being swallowed. This is very distressing and, of course, lethal. Please understand how anger can grow in this conditions.

4°) A salary. A pay. Something, whatever allows them to buy goods and services in the humanoid society. The neo-othyug here is a visionary who understands the wasted potential of its brethren and wants to buy them a civilization. So, it requires to be payed to repair and unclog the sewers and treat non-organic wastes, and with the money, the othyug community will buy itself a decent housing, send their promising larvae to the common-knowledge and magical schools and build a temple to the halving goddess of food (they were recently evangelized by a halfiing priest flushed by brigands in his toilets who somehow lost himself among the othyug community and introduced them to the concept of divinity. When asked about where does all the shit comes from, he made some embarrassed response...). If the project is accepted, the first othyug priests will soon take care themselves of the magical healing and of warding the undead, studious othyugh architects will build spacious undercities for their brethren and greatly ameliorate the waste-disposal system of the city, and years latter, the first othyug-exclusive group of adventurer will go out of town to the next city to convert the local othyugs to civilization.

Would the PCs live long enough, they could learn that the visionary neo-othyug ascended to demi-divinity or even to be the first real othyug god, and the PCs themselves are mythological / folkloric characters on the like of the Magii of christian tradition.

That is, if they convince the local authorities that the dung-eating aberrations are really worth negotiating with.

JRM

03-04-2009 05:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10053571)

Presumably, it means that you are debilitated from having to poop too much.

*Did anyone think differently? I mean, this is pretty much the archetype of the "now, it is time for poop jokes" monste
Never wanted to use them, because I never wanted my game to grind to a halt while everyone made their best coprophagy jokes.*

Well in that case I'd better apologize in advance for most of the otyugh posts I'm going to make on this thread.
:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10053571)

I just can't understand the appeal of having an unpronouncable name as an alternative to their already unpronouncable name.

Particularly inasmuch as, in-gameworld, I'd have to believe there'd be a much simpler, more common, and probably scatological name for the things.

Just out of curiosity, how do people pronounce these monsters' names?

The Monstrous Manual / Compendium gives an "official" pronunciation of "Aw-tee-ug", but does anyone use it? Everyone I can remember pronouncing Otyugh said "Ot-e-ugh", while Gulguthra is pretty easy as "Gul-goose-ra".

Of course, there are other possible pronunciations, such as "O-tie-ug" or "Ot-Yugh" and "Gul-Goo-thra", "Gul-Guth-ra", "Gul-Gut-Hra", "Gulg-uth-ra", "Gulg-Ut-hra" and so on.

So what (if any) are people using?

demiurge1138

03-04-2009 05:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

"Gul-Guth-ra" is what I go with when I use the alt-otyugh name, which is admittedly not often. I find it an odd choice, because it's clearly derived from Golgotha, the hill where Jesus was crucified. Did an otyugh in the Realms die for the sins of all the other otyughs? Do they collect skulls (Golgotha translates to "place of the skulls")?

JRM

03-04-2009 05:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10054823)

That is, if they convince the local authorities that the dung-eating aberrations are really worth negotiating with.

The main problem otyughs have dealing with humanoids is that their psychologies are so radically different. They simply cannot comprehend why the two-legs are so revulsed and embarrassed by the perfectly natural function of excretion. Why, it's almost as bizarre as how humanoids view reproduction!

That's why otyughs have such trouble with public relations exercises, like the attempt by the Otyugh Sewer Workers and Associated Dung Crafters Union to improve their image through a "Thanking You for the Poo" campaign. Alas, the friendly voice out of the cesspool saying "Very nice, please come again", the helpful tentacle reaching up to offer pieces of toilet paper and the notes on the outhouse door saying "Your dung tastes sickly, please visit a proctologist" didn't have the desired effect. The campaign was a complete failure, resulting in a massive outbreak of constipation.

"I don't want to go, the toilet talks to me in my head!"

EmperorSeth

03-04-2009 06:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10053117)

Heh. I once toyed with the idea that dragons eat practically anything, including rocks, and metabolize almost everything except noble metals and magical residue, which they excrete as gold, silver and gems. :D

The Lunar video games used that. Apparently all diamonds are really dragon poop. The dragons seem so shocked that we want them so eagerly. Heh, when you think about it, in that situation, we're the dragons' otyughs!

As for the neo-otyugh, now I can't imagine anything but an otygh wearing sunglasses and a trenchcoat, and saying "Whoa!"

Mr. Teapot

03-04-2009 06:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10055105)

Just out of curiosity, how do people pronounce these monsters' names?

"Oh Tug" or maybe "Oat yug". But I'm well aware I could be mistaken.

JRM

03-04-2009 07:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10055291)

As for the neo-otyugh, now I can't imagine anything but an otygh wearing sunglasses and a trenchcoat, and saying "Whoa!"

No, it all works out. In the Matrix trilogy the Zionists did live in sewers, after all. The machines must have rebuilt their bodies to process waste, and implanted a consensual hallucination so the "humans" were unaware of their true, horrible form.

Well my idea makes about as much sense as the Matrix sequels.;

Mr. Teapot

03-04-2009 08:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10055192)

"Gul-Guth-ra" is what I go with when I use the alt-otyugh name, which is admittedly not often. I find it an odd choice because it's clearly derived from Golgotha, the hill where Jesus was crucified. Did an otyugh in the Realms die for the sins of all the other otyughs? Do they collect skulls (Golgotha translates to "place of the skulls")?

Didn't *Dogma* already cover that? Golgotha was where you sent people to be executed. When people die, their bowels release themselves, meaning Golgotha was covered in poo.

Or it was just a poorly chosen name. That's always an option in D&D.

noisms

03-04-2009 09:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Owlbear

Another day, another icon. Owlbears are one of the pillars of D&D, like illithids, beholders and drow, and I like them.

As with all wizard creations, Owlbears have a very obvious use: as a guardian for something a wizard wants to protect. That makes it difficult to think of other ideas, but one concept I've often thought about is a City of Owlbears. This would be an ancient, ruined city, now overgrown by thick, primeval-looking forest a la Fangorn, in which a number of Owlbears have made their nests. Its streets would echo with their screeches and howls, and wanderers or adventurers would come seeking its buried treasures - and be devoured.

There are some oddball items in the entry - information that Owlbears wake at noon and sleep at midnight because they are a combination of diurnal and nocturnal animals; rumours of arctic Owlbears which are a mixture of snowy owls and polar bears; and prices of 2000 silver pieces or 5000 silver pieces for eggs and hatchlings. I think this might have come up in the MM before - the prices for owl-based creatures are always for some reason listed in silver rather than gold. Anyway, another idea for the egg-thief campaign...

Mikaze

03-04-2009 05:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've long tried to imagine what a growl-hoot would sound like, and it resulted in a few sleepless nights during my childhood.

Call the owlbear goofy if you want, but it will fuck your day up because it is made of BEAR and OWL.

Though barn-owlbears would be a bit harder to take seriously. Then again, I guess one could be bred as the heraldic

mascot of some noble family with cash to burn. Now I'm imagining white barn-owlbears being tamed and kept as a show of station and status in some wintry kingdom.

Owlbears the Game

(un)reason

03-04-2009 05:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10056122)

Owlbear

Another day, another icon. Owlbears are one of the pillars of D&D, like illithids, beholders and drow, and I like them.

There are some oddball items in the entry - information that Owlbears wake at noon and sleep at midnight because they are a combination of diurnal and nocturnal animals; rumours of arctic Owlbears which are a mixture of snowy owls and polar bears; and prices of 2000 silver pieces or 5000 silver pieces for eggs and hatchlings. I think this might have come up in the MM before - the prices for owl-based creatures are always for some reason listed in silver rather than gold. Anyway, another idea for the egg-thief campaign...

This stuff got further filled in in their Ecology article, including stats for polar and winged owlbears. (if you think a bear'll fuck you right up, just think how nasty it is when it can fly silently as well) That's one of the joys of hybrids. By mixing and matching parts, you can come up with a ridiculous number of variants that fulfil different roles from a fairly small set of components.

Inyssius

03-04-2009 05:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I **love** owlbears. They are (and have always been) by far my favorite creature of all time, although the competitors for second place are legion. I don't have any idea why I find them so great, but I do.

I just use them as the quintessential forest random encounter, myself--and a rare one, at that--but what they lack in utility, they make up for many times over in **win**.

Could they climb in 2e? Random question. It just seems like they might.

JRM

03-04-2009 06:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10054823)

(they were recently evangelized by a halfling priest flushed by brigands in his toilets who somehow lost himself

among the othyug community and introduced them to the concept of divinity. When asked about where does all the shit comes from, he made some embarrassed response...).

snip

Would the PCs live long enough, they could learn that the visionary neo-othyug ascended to demi-divinity or even to be the first real othyug god, and the PCs themselves are mythological / folkloric characters on the like of the Magii of christian tradition.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10055192)

Did an otyugh in the Realms die for the sins of all the other otyughs?

The thought of how otyughs would approach religion is a fascinating (and disturbing) one. Would their god be the Great Provider, who sends down crap from above? Maybe they believe in an afterlife - the Eternal Cesspool of Plenty at the rotten core of the world, although I prefer the idea that otyughs believe in reincarnation, since they're so linked to recycling biologicals.

If you're a moral otyugh, eating all the crap that comes your way and not breaking the traditions, you'll come back as a neo-otyugh, but those who break with tradition (eating another otyugh's crap, blocking a sewer, murdering a baby otyugh et cetera) are cursed to come back as a lesser being, such as a human (below otyughs in the order of things, cursed to serve otyughs by building and provisioning their sewer-homes, although if they're good humans they may get to come back as otyughs), an animal or even a lowly plant.

Being neutral and strongly linked to the destructive side of nature, maybe highly spiritual otyughs tend to be Druids rather than Clerics?

If they're anything like humans psychologically, otyughs are likely to believe they are the superior lifeform, "And the Great Provider stretched its tentacles across the land and filled it with living things, all of which were tasked to create food for its chosen people, the otyughs. The lowest of them, the plants, would only provide when they died and fell into out lairs, the middle-ranking, the animals, where given the ability to produce food from the flesh of lifeforms below them, while the highest animals, the humans, were tasked with an instinct to create great nests in which us otyughs could live in comfort. Thus the Great Provider blessed his children with plenty, to show the love and favour in which it held its ultimate creation, us Gulguthra, who are formed in its holy image."

Alternatively, otyughs could form a "**cargo cult**". They can see the gods are giving the humans so much crap they're throwing it away, while sending none to the otyughs. So the humans must be intercepting divine cargos of crap that rightfully belong to the otyughs through some magical ritual. So, the cargo-cult otyughs start imitating the actions of those humans, hoping to stumble upon the ceremony they use to gain all these treasures.

JRM

03-04-2009 06:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10057439)

I've long tried to imagine what a growl-hoot would sound like, and it resulted in a few sleepless nights during my childhood.

Grrwhoo?

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10057461)

*This stuff got further filled in in their Ecology article, including stats for polar and winged owlbears. (if you think a bear'll fuck you right up, just think how nasty it is when it can fly silently as well) *snip**

Oh yes, the notion of a polar owlbear just makes me cackle inside, as polar bears and snowy owls are the largest examples of their animal-type, and camouflaged to boot.:D

Winged Owlbears are a cute concept to, and they're no more implausible in D&D than a Gryphon, just winged owl-bear chimeras instead of eagle-lions.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10057462)

Could they climb in 2e? Random question. It just seems like they might.

Well there's no mention of them being able to climb in the Monster Manual, but I see no reason they can't. Bears are good climbers, and owls live in trees. So wouldn't owlbears be better climbers than either, since they combine a bear's body with an owl's grasping talons?

JRM

03-04-2009 06:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10056122)

Owlbear

There are a couple of points in the Owlbear entry that jumped out at me:

"Owlbears speak their own language, which consists of very loud screeches of varying length and pitch"

and

"The owlbear attacks prey on sight, always fighting to the death (ignore morale rating for purposes of determining retreat)."

Now there's a language even less useful than Elven Cat, the ability to talk to an creature that will fight you to the death as soon as it sees you!

However, it begs the question why owlbeats have a language, presumably it's because they've got Low intelligence, which raises the question why they're that smart when bears are only Semi-intelligent. The answer's obvious if you're familiar with the 1E Monster Manual. Giant Owls are as intelligent as humans, and averaging the two intelligent scores resulted in a Low-int owlbear.

So, if owlbeats have a language they presumably have some form of culture, and in turn that suggests to me an explanation as to their "attack to the death on sight" behaviour. Maybe they only do this to humanoids, because they have a dim recollection of the wizard(s) who gave them their current form. I imagine owlbear mothers taking their kits to see the forest elders, who tells them the tale:

"Skraa-raa war hoo grraa"

Oh sorry, I forgot to switch the translator on.;

"In the Old Times, we were beautiful flying creatures with great wisdom and intelligence. That was before the humans came. They said they wanted to learn from us, but really wished to make us their slaves. They failed in their first attempts, for we simply flew out of their traps, growling our contempt for their treachery. But humans, being a form of demon, can call upon supernatural powers. They used their sorcery to change us by fusing our essence with the brute bears of the forest.

So, whenever you feel the agony of your body, or an urge to fly you can never satisfy, remember that it is the humans who did this to us, and they'd do worse to us if given the chance. Many a mother has been murdered by humans, and her eggs or cubs carried off to slavery and worse.

If you ever meet a human, you must try to kill it, even if you would die in the attempt. The experiments they'd do to you if they captured you alive would be far worse than the pain of death."

noisms

03-04-2009 07:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10057635)

There are a couple of points in the Owlbear entry that jumped out at me:

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and

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If you ever meet a human, you must try to kill it, even if you would die in the attempt. The experiments they'd do to you if they captured you alive would be far worse than the pain of death."

JRM, I find your ideas Relevant to My Interests.

Mikaze

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hmm...

<http://img10.imageshack.us/img10/664...riginal.th.jpg> + <http://img3.imageshack.us/img3/7706/smokeybear.th.jpg> = <http://img10.imageshack.us/img10/664...riginal.th.jpg>

"Give a hoot, or I'll eat your godsdamned face."

JRM

03-04-2009 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Okay, I've read through Ed Greenwood's *The Ecology of the Gulguthra*. Didn't remember much of it, since it was a long time since I last read it.

Dragon #96 is the April 1985 issue, four years before the Monstrous Compendium came out. It seems quite evident to me that Mr Greenwood's article was an influence on the 2E version of the otyugh.

Anyhows, here are some bits that attracted my attention:

[1] Some of the details Greenwood gives about otyughs are identical to the 2E version, but I don't remember them being in the 1E MM. The range of the telepathic communication, neo-otyughs using grasped people as shields. The 2-4 damage to grappled victims.

[2] There is no mention of the eyestalk acting as a telepathic receiver/transmitter in the Dragon article. That may be original to the 2E MM.

[3] A few additions Greenwood made do not appear in the 2E MM.

[3.1] He gives otyughs ultravision as well as infravision, and says that otyugh's sleep, but even then " its eyestalk and eyes function as though it were awake, for the purpose of detecting approaching creatures ". and adds that bright lights "sometimes so disconcert these creatures that they do not attack"

[3.2] Greenwood writes "Gulguthras cannot smell with any acuity, probably due to the dung and decay that customarily surrounds them, and so they cannot track prey, nor readily discern the true natures of disguised creatures."

That's reasonable enough, and doesn't necessarily conflict with the 2E MM saying otyughs communicate via "certain smells". They may only be sensitive to their own communication pheromones.

[3.3] According to Greenwood otyugh bites infect with typhus "Due to the creature's favored habitat (proximity to dung and carrion) and its digestive system (wastes are spat back out of its mouth)".

That's a curiously specific disease, the AD&D MMs are far more generic about what infections an otyugh bite gives its victims. I do like the idea that an otyugh excretes as well as ingests through its mouth, there are some primitive animals (i.e. jellyfish) that do this, and it seems nastily appropriate for an otyugh.

[3.4] Finally, the article goes into some detail about Gulguthra reproduction, and I found the sordid details interesting enough to share...

First up was "a report by Phiraz of the Naturalists to the Commissioner of Public Sewers in the city of Scornubel", the last paragraph of which said:

Quote:

Thankfully, otyughs mate only seldom (perhaps once in every seven years or so), traveling by night and subterranean routes to bonepits deep under the earth, where the remains of many ancient creatures lie in vast layers. There they mate in mass gatherings with others of their kind who have made the same journey.

This had a note with the "real deal" according to Elminster.

Quote:

Every gulguthra is bisexual. Each produces, once every seven winters, a jellylike "eggmass" and travels underground (in a slow, patient journey) by instinct and memory until it reaches others of its kind. Then it regurgitates the eggmass from a secondary stomach and wanders off, that part of its task done. In some manner not yet understood another gulguthra can fertilize any eggmass (except its own) by taking it briefly into its mouth, or perhaps some internal organ, and expelling it again.

An eggmass that is fertilized, if left undisturbed, will develop in one week's time into a miniature version of the parent that provided the eggmass. (An otyugh eggmass will only produce another otyugh, and likewise for the neo-otyugh, even though either species can fertilize any eggmass.) This "newborn" creature is driven by an instinctual urge to find warmth and food, and will wander off to seek its own "fortune," returning to its birthplace years later to breed in its turn.

Gulguthra young are smaller (3-5 HD) and weaker (damage of 1-6/1-6/1-4, tentacle strength of 16) than mature specimens, but are otherwise identical to their parents, and grow to maturity within 4 months.

Apart from 2E saying they mate once a year, this does not conflict with the Monstrous Manual entry, although it makes no mention of them migrating to breed. Notice that the stats for a newborn are identical.

The bonepit mating site deep beneath the earth remind me of Sleepers' post #56 with a Sargasso Sea of sewage "the fantasy version of a landfill" where "In the center, built under the largest single pile, is the center of otyugh civilization. The Library." as well as Monsieur Meuble's post #76 idea of a visionary neo-otyugh seeking to buy his people a civilization where "studious otyugh architects will build spacious undercities for their brethren and greatly ameliorate the waste-disposal system of the city". Perhaps both such sites were founded on one of the otyughs ancient breeding grounds?

DMH

03-04-2009 08:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10055105)

The Monstrous Manual / Compendium gives an "official" pronunciation of "Aw-tee-ug"

I use that (which sounds like a strangled cough or something used by an eeeyukthyologist ;)) or gul-guth-ra (which rolls off the tongue). But like I said before I have never used the creature.

But now I want to.

Kakita Kojiro

03-04-2009 09:47 PM

Gah. Bisexual otyugh orgies with dungeon decor is a *bit* beyond the pale for one of my D&D games.

Might be a good hook for a tongue-in-cheek Saga of the Sages campaign, though, where our intrepid naturalists venture forth to see if Peta Girl is right about all her whacky claims.

JRM

03-04-2009 10:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10057774)

Hmm...

"Give a hoot, or I'll eat your godsdamned face."

That reminds me of the another explanation for owlbears. They're not the creations of evil wizards, but of mad druids. "Mess up the sacred forest will you? Well see how you like it when the forest beasts fight back!" They're

nature red in beak and paw, created to defend the woods from the ravages of humanoid civilization (or some other threat to nature).

Personally, I don't entirely buy that, since surely an unnatural chimera like an owlbear is itself a threat to the natural order? Maybe it's a "lesser of two evils" deal.

Oh, and that's a nice picture of "sooty the owlbear". That'll teach those dang arsonists. :D

JRM

03-04-2009 10:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10057867)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10055105)

The Monstrous Manual / Compendium gives an "official" pronunciation of "Aw-tee-ug"

I use that (which sounds like a strangled cough or something used by an eeeyukthyologist ;)) or gul-guth-ra (which rolls off the tongue). But like I said before I have never used the creature.

But now I want to.

Same here, but I start it with "Oh-" instead of "Aw-". Shouldn't it be spelled something like Artyugh if it was pronounced the MM/MC way?

JRM

03-04-2009 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10058100)

Gah. Bisexual otyugh orgies with dungeon decor is a bit beyond the pale for one of my D&D games.

Might be a good hook for a tongue-in-cheek Saga of the Sages campaign, though, where our intrepid naturalists venture forth to see if Peta Girl is right about all her whacky claims.

Well bisexual orgies may sound fun, but if the PCs manage to wangle an invitation they'll be in for a disappointment, going by Mr Greenwood's description. The otyughs just walk up to their chosen partner and vomit an eggmass at their feet, then leave. If the chosen otyugh doesn't fertilize it, some other gulguthra will do the honours.

Most of the "mass gathering" is talking shop (i.e. talking sewage, since these are otyughs).

Oh, and I found Greenwood's use of "egg mass" a bit confusing. To me the word implies a lot of eggs (e.g. a **Ootheca**), while an otyugh produces just one.

ESkemp

03-05-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10057439)

I've long tried to imagine what a growl-hoot would sound like, and it resulted in a few sleepless nights during my childhood.

Entertainingly enough, Blizzard actually had to devise one so their owlbears, pardon me, "moonkin" wouldn't be totally silent when you fight them.

I also have much love for owlbears. I don't even think I ever said "a wizard did it" to explain them; like the aurumvorax, pseudodragon, griffon, "sea lion," dire animals, and occasionally just plain mundane fantasy animals (nobody else ever devised new species of poisonous snake native to a world?), I like them as examples of how zoology just goes interesting places in a fantasy world. Maybe an owlbear's a hybrid. Maybe it's just the scariest "naturally" occurring monotreme ever. Who knows? All that really matters is that it's immense, ill-tempered, and has a beak where you'd expect a snout to be.

demiurge1138

03-05-2009 01:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I love owlbears, and my players love them too. They've come to expect an owlbear at low levels, actually. Sort of a rite of passage is to survive one of those monsters.

I didn't remember that 2e owlbears were sapient, but I prefer mine at animal level intelligence. I also don't think they need the "wizard did it" excuse as badly as some other creatures, but I like the idea of multiple wizards all trying to take the credit, branding their owlbears with arcane marks (risky!), etc.

Wakboth

03-05-2009 03:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Owlbears are a hoot, literally. :D

They're one of the better mash-up critters, and definitely better than chimeras. Makes me wonder why they have never featured in real-world folklore!

Monsieur Meuble

03-05-2009 07:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10056122)

and prices of 2000 silver pieces or 5000 silver pieces for eggs and hatchlings. I think this might have come up in the MM before - the prices for owl-based creatures are always for some reason listed in silver rather than gold.

Paying owlbear chickcubs and eggs in silver is traditional in this market, not unlike how it is traditional to speak of gold and diamonds in carats instead of more common units of weight or proportions or how pearls should be displayed on a square of red silk when the fisher discuss to sell them. If you don't, it's worth doing the deal.

This tradition originate from the original purpose of the owlbear and why one would pay so much for a "watchdog" that is always angry, all the time, and will rip your face at the first occasion and would decapitate you in doing so.

See, long time ago, there was this epidemic of lycanthropy ; people where scarred shitless at night of being attacked and contaminated, and of course no one trusted anyone volunteering himself for guarding the community ; obviously, he was a werewolf trying to kill or infect everyone in their sleep ; or, well, he would be one soon, seeing as how a trusted guard would become an evident target.

That's when a mage had the idea to create a "watchdog" that could be a match for a werewolf and was immune to lycanthropy. Unlike the chimera, the owlbear is not a natural hybrid and he is artificially "deficient", in this that the owl and the bear inside are not living in harmony and develop a sense of selves strong enough that, if a third animal try to infiltrate itself in the owlbear, it will get its ass kicked. The owlbear is always angry, mostly with itself (or, more precisely, with the other part of itself), but teratopsychanalists are scarce and so they transfer this anger into a hate of frickin' everything and the willingness to break everything that fall under its eyes into its component parts, while screeching a lot. Blood-injected eyes are also appropriate, of course. So, at night, everyone close doors and windows, you release the owlbear, everyone in several kilometer-squares wakes up when it starts screeching, takes his silver weapon and slays the werewolf it has hugged and is trying to enucleate.

Now, why would any village sell such a major and efficient system to protect itself against such a dire problem ? Well, of course, an even deal would be an exchange between an efficient werewolf-bane and, well, another werewolf-bane. So, if your village wanted to have its own owlbear, you had to compensate with silver. Lot of silver.

And that's where the tradition of paying chickcubs and eggs in silver come from, even though that most owlbear went feral and lycanthropism is under control for the moment...

6inTruder

03-05-2009 09:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Crap! Tried to get a post in earlier, but stupid phone ate it....

So I've kinda been waiting for owlbears so I can bring up an old school monster what seems very much in theme with them: [Eagle Lions!](#)

Those are from a wall fresco at the palace of Knossos. Which is probably where king Minos resided. Minotaur Minos.

randomgamer8466

03-05-2009 09:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

When my players faced the evil Kishite cattle baron Brom Bones and his hundred guardsmen, they were warned that he would fight them in a chariot "pulled by fell fey beasts". When the battle came, they were titillated to find that it was actually hitched to two owlbears. I rule.

s/LaSH

03-05-2009 01:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Owlbears are awesome. On the one hand, they're an incredibly wacky idea - an owl crossed with a bear? I know evil sorcerers are usually mad, but you'd have to be really seriously unbalanced to make something so apparently pointless.

And then you throw one at the players, and years later they're still traumatised by the word "Hoot". The owlbear actually works. If I could justify it, I'd have owlbears in every forest I ever charted.

6inTruder

03-06-2009 04:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10059468)
Owlbears are a hoot, literally. :D

*They're one of the better mash-up critters, and definitely better than chimeras. **Makes me wonder why they have never featured in real-world folklore!***

Check my post above, cause they kinda were.

Monsieur Meuble

03-06-2009 04:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10065003)
Check my post above, cause they kinda were.

Isn't a "eagle lion" just a griffon ?

6inTruder

03-06-2009 04:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10065145)

Isn't a "eagle lion" just a griffon ?

I thought griffon's had to have wings?

Monsieur Meuble

03-06-2009 06:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10065170)
I thought griffon's had to have wings?

Ho. Yes indeed. Silly me.

Kakita Kojiro

03-06-2009 06:39 AM

Frescos at Knossos predate the medieval obsession with categorizing fantastic beasts, though. Cretans probably would've identified griffons as eagle-lions, and [homa birds](#) as eagle-lions, and the Egyptian [axex](#) or saget (or the tšš or sfr, for which I know not the vowel schemes) as eagle-lions. Whether or not they had wings.

Heck, they'd've probably said the [serpopard](#) was pretty darn close.

JRM

03-06-2009 06:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10065170)
I thought griffon's had to have wings?

Well, I believe Gryphons don't have to have wings, it's just that nearly all of them do. According to a brief trawl of the internet wingless griffins do appear in UK heraldry (e.g. there are mentions of a wingless griffin in **these minutes** of the Caid college of Heralds), but I'm having trouble finding authentic pictures.

Your picture probably is an eagle-headed lion rather than a gryphon, as lacks external ears and eagle's talons, which most gryphons are illustrated with.

There are sphinxes with lion's bodies and eagle- or hawk heads too.

Come to think of it, I vaguely remember seeing a picture of an owl-headed sphinx, which suggests a variant on the owlbear, the owlion.

But why should the mad wizards stop there, the world surely needs the owlferret, the owldragon and the

owlotyugh!

EDIT: I've just found a [webpage](#) of a Greek branch of the Rotary Club International which says your picture is a griffin, it says "The emblem of RCI is the Minoan wingless Griffin. The griffins are drawn wingless to emphasize on their constant presence in the throne hall. The mixed form of the wingless griffin represented the three spheres of the world, the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterrestrial, with its eagle head, lion body and snake tail. It also conveyed the regal and divine power."

Inyssiur

03-06-2009 06:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'm not sure eaglelions are even "kinda" the same as owlbears (if a gryphon isn't a gryphon without wings, I shouldn't think an owlbear is still an owlbear without any resemblance whatsoever to a bear or an owl or any mixture of the two), but okay. I've got to say, gryphons *do* look much sleeker without the wings. I'd be awfully tempted to use those (say they're great leapers, too) in some sort of overgrown-temple setting in my next game.

In fact, hell with it, I'm going to use them in *this* game. *ctrl-tab*

EDIT: Wait, snake tail? Wouldn't we classify that as a chimera or mantichore of some sort, then?

6inTruder

03-06-2009 07:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

AWSOME! This thread would make such a great sourcebook.

as for my eaglelions, I'd planned (still plan if I can find the people) to use them as the really big guard animals for an island community of nobles a bit offshore from my primary city.

noisms

03-06-2009 08:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10060558)

Paying owlbear chickcubs and eggs in silver is traditional in this market, not unlike how it is traditional to speak of gold and diamonds in carats instead of more common units of weight or proportions or how pearls should be displayed on a square of red silk when the fisher discuss to sell them. If you don't, it's worth doing the deal.

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precisely, with the other part of itself), but teratopsychanalists are scarce and so they transfer this anger into a hate of frickin' everything and the willingness to break everything that fall under its eyes into its component parts, while screeching a lot. Blood-injected eyes are also appropriate, of course. So, at night, everyone close doors and windows, you release the owlbear, everyone in several kilometer-squares wakes up when it starts screeching, takes his silver weapon and slays the werewolf it has hugged and is trying to enucleate.

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I love this thread.

noisms

03-06-2009 08:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pegasus

Tough to get excited about the Pegasus, because whichever way you look at it, it's really just a winged horse. As with the Nightmare, you're faced with the question: what can you use a Pegasus for other than as a steed? (There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but it doesn't make for very interesting discussion.)

Pegasus are egg-laying - which must make them monotremes I suppose - so could fit into an egg-theft campaign, and there's a nice little description of how to tame one, which I suppose you could use for other flying beings. They have their own language, which is almost up there with Elven Cat and Owlbear in the usefulness stakes, particularly because Pegasus can also understand common.

Greater Pegasus

A Greater Pegasus can only be born when a medusa is slain; there is a 5% chance it will leap fully formed from the decapitated gorgon's neck. That's a very nice touch for a more mythical or legendary style game. But it raises very interesting questions about the relationship between medusas and Pegasus.

Kakita Kojiro

03-06-2009 10:13 AM

Holy cats! I'd totally forgotten the Greater Pegasus. I suppose, for verisimilitude's sake, that you should get a Greater Pegasus and some sort of giant out of slaying the proper type of Medusa...

Also, I must admit... I threw in the towel on Pegasus, and just learned to accept people pluralizing them as "Pegasi". Although I die, a little, inside each time. *sigh*

(un)reason

03-06-2009 10:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10066080)

Pegasus

Tough to get excited about the Pegasus, because whichever way you look at it, it's really just a winged horse.

Yeah. I have nothing much to say here, apart from that Unipegataurs (you work it out) are pretty much PETA girl's ultimate mary-sue wet dream. Beware the bad crossover fanfic, my son. The descriptions florid, and the puns that suck. Beware the characterisation gone astray and shun, adjectives run amuck.

Mikaze

03-06-2009 04:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10066396)

Holy cats! I'd totally forgotten the Greater Pegasus. I suppose, for verisimilitude's sake, that you should get a Greater Pegasus and some sort of giant out of slaying the proper type of Medusa...

*Also, I must admit... I threw in the towel on Pegasus, and just learned to accept people pluralizing them as "Pegasi". Although I die, a little, inside each time. *sigh**

Why do succubi fly on pegasi on high?

Could it be that medusae were driven to evil because their elder caste was constantly hunted down and butchered by pegasus "breeders" from the "good" races?

JRM

03-06-2009 04:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10065450)

Frescos at Knossos predate the medieval obsession with categorizing fantastic beasts, though. Cretans probably would've identified griffons as eagle-lions, and homa birds as eagle-lions, and the Egyptian axex or saget (or the tštš or sfr, for which I know not the vowel schemes) as eagle-lions. Whether or not they had wings.

Yes, I'll agree with you. They wouldn't have called them "Minoan Griffin" at the time.

From my limited understanding of the subject, the ancient Greeks had a fairly consistent concept of a **Grypes** (Gryphon/Griffin) as a lion-bodied, winged, eared and eagle-headed creature, with paws for feet rather than eagle's talons of the medieval and heraldic version.

Still, there were variations as you say. This one in particular struck my attention:

Quote:

"For these animals do exist in India," he [the C1st AD Indian sage Iarḥas] said, "and are held in veneration as being sacred to Helios the Sun; and the Indian artists, when they represent Helios, yoke four of them abreast to draw the images; and in size and strength they resemble lions but having this advantage over them that they have wings, they will attack them, and they get the better of elephants and of Drakones. But they have no great power of flying, not more than have birds of short flight; **for they are not winged as is proper with birds, but the palms of their feet are webbed with red membranes, such that they are able to revolve them, and make a flight and fight in the air**; and the tiger alone is beyond their powers of attack, because in swiftness it rivals the winds."

Philostratus, Life of Apollonius of Tyana 3. 48 (trans. Conybeare) (Greek biography C1st to C2nd A.D.) :

Is it my imagination, or is that describing a *bat-winged* gryphon?

JRM

03-06-2009 04:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10066080)

Pegasus

Tough to get excited about the Pegasus, because whichever way you look at it, it's really just a winged horse.

I can only agree with you. finding Nightmares far more interesting, with that "carrying/tempting you to perdition" theme, they just have more character to me.

So at first I found it hard to think of anything to say about Pegasus. Well, apart from **this**.

The MM writeup gives Pegasoi so little to work with, with personalities simultaneously one-dimensional and contradictory. They're always Chaotic Good, regardless of upbringing or colour (we wouldn't want PETA girl to think we're horse-racists now, would we?) and very shy and wild, which presumably would make them very fond of their freedom.

Yet, if somebody sticks a harness round their neck and makes a proficiency roll they become obedient servants for life, provided that person is "Good".

Oh yes? I know it fits the mythology, but the original Pegasus wasn't sapient and couldn't talk. I doubt he was any smarter than a regular horse, so taming him like that makes sense. To AD&D's version of the Pegasus, I'd have thought it more likely it would revolt at this attempt at slavery, rather than meekly obey once it is tamed, although at least they have the grace to say "pegasi do not like to be tamed".

Perhaps the AD&D pegasus has been *designed* so they must obey Good aligned masters, whether it wants to or not? The gods/ancient wizards/whatever saw a need for loyal winged steeds in service to Good, so made them to order.

That would add some interesting wrinkles, with free Pegasoi, fey creatures and other do-gooders trying to free the "tamed" steeds of a Flying Cavalry regiment, who suffer appalling injuries and deaths during their master's campaigns.

My preferred solution is that the humans and demi-humans view Pegasoi as sacred creatures, and wouldn't dream of taming/enslaving them. It would anger the gods! Instead they petition Pegasoi for their help in the service of weal on a case by case basis - trading oats for a flying messenger service, carrying medicine to the sick, imploring a pegasus hero to team up with their greatest warrior to slay the monster that is laying waste to the land. Such relationships can end up as partnerships, but the Pegasus is never "tamed".

JRM

03-06-2009 05:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10065473)

But why should the mad wizards stop there, the world surely needs the owlferret, the owldragon and the owltyugh!

Now I want to stat up the Owltyugh.:mad:

The Owltyugh, a bizarre chimera only a maniac could conceive, mixing a giant owl and otyugh.

A great round face with a snapping beak beneath three baleful eyes.

Broad wings that carry it through the air with deadly silence.

Swooping down to seize its prey in its three terrible taloned feet.

Two clasping tentacles that snatch victims from farther than seems possible.

Vomiting a spray of unspeakable filth that can render threats helpless with nausea.

Worse of all, they are telepathic. Those who fight an Owltyugh are constantly distracted by the screeching insanity, hatred, pain and hunger pouring into their minds.

:D

Grymbok

03-06-2009 06:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10066080)

Greater Pegasus

A Greater Pegasus can only be born when a medusa is slain; there is a 5% chance it will leap fully formed from the decapitated gorgon's neck. That's a very nice touch for a more mythical or legendary style game. But it raises very interesting questions about the relationship between medusas and Pegasus.

I realise that complaining about organisation in the MM is a bit like complaining about the rain if you live in Birmingham, but I can't help but think that this little tidbit could benefit from being placed in the Medusa entry rather than here (or ideally in both)!

DMH

03-06-2009 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The only thing I want to say about the pegasus is that the second cover of the 1e Monster Manual, where a flock takes on a red dragon, is cool.

They could join lammasu as flying slayers of evil.

JRM

03-06-2009 08:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10068002)

The only thing I want to say about the pegasus is that the second cover of the 1e Monster Manual, where a flock takes on a red dragon, is cool.

They could join lammasu as flying slayers of evil.

That reminds me, the 2E MM entry for Pegasus says: "*In battle, a pegasus will try to lure larger opponents (such as dragons) into tight spaces. As the opponent struggles to maneuver into attack range, the pegasus climbs and attacks with its hooves from above.*"

It's a great picture, But even a flock of 1-10 Pegasoi would be no match for an adult red dragon in 2E. That cover doesn't show the scene two combat rounds later, with the dragon flying off with charred Pegasoi dropping from the sky all around it.

It's not so bad in First Edition, since 1E dragons are weaker, but that dragon looks like an Ancient Worm to me, going by the size, so it would still slaughter them.

Just compare the 2E stats:

Pegasus: AC6, HD4, THACO 17, Attacks 1-8/1-8/1-3.

Adult Red Dragon: AC -5, HD 17, THACO -1, Attacks 1-10+6/1-10+6/3-30+6 or 12d10+6 fire breath, 20 yard radius Fear Aura and spell use.

Hatchling Red Dragon: AC 0, HD 9, THACO 7, Attacks 1-10+1/1-10+1/3-30+1 or 2d10+6 fire breath.

A flock of ten would barely be a match for a hatchling, many Pegasoi would be killed fighting off even a baby red dragon.

Obviously we need stats for a "Legendary Pegasus" capable of such heroic deeds!

durecellrabbit

03-06-2009 09:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

You can eat them. As they're intelligent, live in herd, have detect alignment spell and can flying it makes them interesting to hunt

Kakita Kojiro

03-06-2009 09:56 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10067663)

Oh yes? I know it fits the mythology, but the original Pegasus wasn't sapient and couldn't talk. I doubt he was any smarter than a regular horse, so taming him like that makes sense. To AD&D's version of the Pegasus, I'd have thought it more likely it would revolt at this attempt at slavery, rather than meekly obey once it is tamed, although at least they have the grace to say "pegasi do not like to be tamed".

I am not so sure that we should assume the mythic Pegasos was non-sentient. His brother was Chrysaor, Geryon's father, and he was certainly sentient. Together, they're both regarded as children of Medeusa and Poseidon (generally), and such offspring tend to be relatively sentient in behavior (till you get to the fringe types, like the Nemean lion or Stympthalian birds).

Don't recall any recountings of the Bellerophon myth where Pegasos *talks* to him, though. Of course, the big point in the Bellerophon myth was that he got shook off because a gadfly bit Pegasos, which is not so much a threat in D&D, so there's definitely a limit to our mythic verisimilitude here.

JRM

03-07-2009 12:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10068473)

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Well all those things are true, but I believe Pegasus is in the "fringe types" you mention as far as intelligence goes.

I can't think of any legends that describe Pegasus doing anything that implies any intelligence above the animal, so I consider him to be a "Mythical Animal" just like his great-auntie the Hydra or great-uncle the Crommyonian Sow (that's using the version of the Medusa myth where she's descended from Ekhidna, of course).

Plus, there are other winged horses in Greek mythology, and I don't recall them being described as having human-level brains either.

While there's still the principle of "the absence of evidence is no evidence of absence" to consider, the case for Pegasos being intelligent seems pretty weak. As far as sapient horses go, we could probably make a stronger argument for Bucephalos being intelligent than Pegasos, from the ancient literary "evidence".

Strangething

03-07-2009 01:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

There are a scary number of critters in the MM that are intelligent enough to have language, but don't have hands.

I'd say that's a good reason to be a mount or "pet."

Monsieur Meuble

03-07-2009 02:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

As the sages state in the Manual, "Pegasi must be ridden bareback; they will not accept saddles. " As we are talking about a flying horse that is supposed to bring humanoids in the air and to do the acrobatic maneuvers involved in fighting flying monsters, you can easily see how the relationship between the rider and his mount can end pretty quickly and with an audible "splortch".

The thing is, they are not supposed to be ridden by humanoids, but by serpentoids. They were the ancestral gift of some Mad Snake God Of Yore that was given to the yuan-tis to celebrate the taking of the main temple of said god, formerly in possessions of the medusaic civilisation. That is, the Mad Snake God was a Mad Snake God for both Yuan-Tis and Medusaplural, its cathedral was built by the snake-haired ones, the snake-people invaded it and slaughtered every former celebrants and the Mad Snake God was quite content of such an attention, used the decapitated remains of his former priests to create the first couple of pegasi and offered them as submissive mounts and pets to the snake-people. The yuan-ti rider coils himself firmly on the flanks of the pegasus and so can "ride" it in almost every position without falling.

Now, some would object that pegasi are Good aligned and sentient, plus they fly, so they should have fled away of their supposed masters the moment they appeared, and they would make very uncooperative mounts for the evil actions of the YTs.

That would be right if we weren't talking about a MAD Snake God who deliberately made them Good AND compulsively obligated to obey to any Yuan-Tis because he found the idea of good horsey crying as they are forced to plunder an orphanage funny. Plus all kind of fun when hunted for sport, cooked alive for food or tortured for fun. But, in some conditions, a pegasus can break the compulsion (chosen of the Good Gods ? High will ? Stung by a gadfly ?), some free ones started the Revolution, freed their comrades of specie and actively participated to the Fall of the Yuan-Ti Empire.

Still now, nonetheless, would a pegasus encounter a yuan-ti knowing his legends, the flying horse would be obligated to follow any order he would receive from the slithering bad guy, including betraying his human rider and companion at the worst of times and it would be a subquest in itself to find how to de-brainwash the animal and save him from a life of evil servitude.

The pegasus language ? Yuan-Ti language with a horsish accent.

The Greater Pegasi still born from slain medusaesis ? Well, the Mad Snake God quickly realized that, with only one couple and in the hand of such cruel masters, the specie wouldn't go for too long, he made the original creative miracle a feature of its former followers. So, it's actually when you slain a medusa descendant of a priest of the Mad Snake God that you have a 100% chance of spawning a Greater Pegasus. And now, around 5% of the medusa population descent from said clerics.

Sleeper

03-08-2009 12:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

You what would really upset PETA-girl?

A brave new continent, swarming with pegasussesoi. Flocks so huge, they block out the sun. As common as the bison was in the American Old West. So much so that mages travelling in magical rail-cars take pot-shots with *fireballs* for entertainment, leaving the charred corpses where they lay.

The less lucky become domesticated. But not as high-strung, high-maintenance mounts and companions. No, they're kept for their meat. Wings broken and hobbled. Kept in pens where they can barely move, and fed on piped-in oats.

Because the new continent is not being tamed by the relatively harmless and useless pegasus. No, the preferred wild and woolly animal for the wand-slinging heroes is the savage griffin or the hippogriff. And they get hungry. For pseudo-horseflesh.

A counterpart to the elf holocaust.

noisms

03-08-2009 02:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10069919)

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Great stuff.

noisms

03-08-2009 02:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Peryton

Is it just me or have we been talking a lot about mythical flying beasts recently? Anyway, here's another one.

I quite like Perytons - the entry has a nice mythical vibe to it, what with the creature's *modus operandi* of ripping out people's hearts so it can breed, and the way it casts a human shadow rather than a bird's, and its single-minded determination to fix on one target and one target alone. One thing that I wish had been included was the legend that Perytons are some sort of reincarnation of dead human souls, which was why they cast a human shadow. Maybe there could be some way of communicating with those souls, or even rescuing them from their cruel fate...

Perytons seem tailor-made for the egg-thief campaign; not only can their eggs be sold, but the beasts often carry victims off to their nests, which makes the discovery of money and magic items highly likely. Another adventure seed would be, I suppose, helping out a clan of dwarves bothered by several Peryton families up in the mountains.

demiurge1138

03-08-2009 02:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've only used perytons once, but it was a doozy.

I was running a published module, "Tammeraut's Fate", in which the PCs investigate an abandoned monastery that's been abandoned due to oceanic zombie attacks. Now, there's a peryton nesting in the belltower, attracted by the wafting scent of blood and corpses. The party's investigating, fights some sea hags, captures and interrogates one. They're asking it about the other dangers on the island, and she says "right behind you..."

Nobody passes a Listen check. The peryton swoops down, gets a critical hit, tears out the dwarf ranger's heart in one gulp.

The rest of the party flees, screaming.

They investigate the inside of the monastery, figure out the zombies came out of the sea and might be back, try to find a defensible location. They find the belltower. The ground floor entrance is overgrown with green mold, which the party rogue manages to dodge through and climb up. And he opens the door to the top floor and sees the peryton. And fails his Move Silently.

The peryton wheels around, snapping at him, and he freaks out, rushing back downstairs as fast as his legs can carry him. The peryton, enraged and hungry, squeezes down after him. He dodges the green slime, slams the door behind him, barricades it, then hears the sharp thudding as the peryton attempts to bash it down. He backs up, fearing for his life as the door bursts open... and the peryton collapses into a skeleton, its flesh eaten away by all of the green slime it couldn't avoid with its bulk. The player's expression was perhaps the most relieved I've ever seen.

JRM

03-08-2009 08:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10076315)

Peryton *I quite like Perytons - the entry has a nice mythical vibe to it, what with the creature's modus operandi of ripping out people's hearts so it can breed, and the way it casts a human shadow rather than a bird's, and its single-minded determination to fix on one target and one target alone. One thing that I wish had been included was the legend that Peryons are some sort of reincarnation of dead human souls, which was why they cast a human shadow. Maybe there could be some way of communicating with those souls, or even rescuing them from their cruel fate...*

Perytons are curious beasts, and I'm glad the original MM introduced me to them - how many of these creatures would we know about if it wasn't for D&D? The writers of the original Monster Manual deserve my thanks for conjuring up this beast from whatever obscurity they found it in. (The Peryton's origins are pretty obscure, they may be at least partially a modern invention - from a 1959 book *The Book of Imaginary Beings* - or from a medieval bestiary.)

I definitely agree about the soul-issue. Perytons should be damned supernatural beings, ghosts made flesh who have lost their souls. They tear out hearts to steal the soul of their victim, which allows them to live normal lives. That means that if you're PC is heart-ripped by a Peryton they can't be brought back from the dead, (although maybe if your friends kill the monster it will free your essence).

That has all kinds of story potential: What sin caused the Perytons to suffer this curse? Where all Perytons human before their death and transformation (explaining their human shadows and lust for human hearts) and, if so, what culture or cultures did they belong to?

Or even a moral dilemma: A Peryton has gained a soul and is desperate to redeem itself, (becoming LG, dedicating itself to charitable deeds et cetera), and the soul its stolen was some villain or other. But the villain was a nobleman, and a war may result if he isn't brought back to life. What should the players do?

They could end up questing into the Abyss, to face down the forgotten Demon Prince who is responsible for Perytons and rescue the Good Peryton's soul from her talons.

Hellzon

03-08-2009 09:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Mental note: Convert the Peryton to 4E.

[Wikipedia](#) has a nicer take on the beastie:

Quote:

One alleged account, which was chronicled by an unnamed rabbi in Fez during the 16th century, states that Publius Cornelius Scipio encountered these beasts near the Strait of Gibraltar sometime between 237 and 183 BC. According to this rabbinic historian, Scipio and his soldiers were attacked by a flock of these animals, who seemed impervious to their weapons. The perytons descended upon the ships, attacking the sailors, tearing them up with sharp teeth, and wallowing in their blood. **However, after completing this gruesome ritual, a peryton's shadow would become its own, and it would be free to fly away and live the rest of its life in peace. Each peryton had to kill one man before its soul would be set at ease, and this probably limited the slaughter.**

(Emphasis mine.) Sharp teeth in a stag's face?

Upcoming: Phantom, Phoenix, Piercer, Pit Fiend and Effing Intelligent Plants. Awesome.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10076351)
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snip

Great story demiurge, some of my fondness memories of playing D&D have been amusing interaction with NPCs and when a PC is facing death (especially mine!), wondering whether they'll survive the next melee round, hearts in our mouths.

Topher

03-08-2009 10:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10055105)
*Just out of curiosity, how do people pronounce these monsters' names?
The Monstrous Manual / Compendium gives an "official" pronunciation of "Aw-tee-ug", but does anyone use it?
Everyone I can remember pronouncing Otyugh said "Ot-e-ugh", while Gulguthra is pretty easy as "Gul-goose-ra".*

Of course, there are other possible pronunciations, such as "O-tie-ug" or "Ot-Yugh" and "Gul-Goo-thra", "Gul-Guth-ra", "Gul-Gut-Hra", "Gulg-uth-ra", "Gulg-Ut-hra" and so on.

So what (if any) are people using?

The otyugh and neo-otyugh were among the many many monsters stol...er...*ahem* "borrowed" from D&D for the original *Final Fantasy* videogame. Monster names got spelled out phonetically in katakana (sometimes resulting in some humorous changes, like the bulette becoming the "barettta" due to the Japanese L/R thing).

Anyway, the FF versions of these monsters are the "ochu" and "neochu", and that is how I have been pronouncing "otyugh" and "neo-otyugh" for years as a result.

Concept artwork for the Ochu in the original FF:

http://images3.wikia.nocookie.net/fi...vs_Warrior.jpg

Recent games in the series tend to give Ochus a ring of petals around their midsection, giving the appearance of a ballerina's tutu. I am totally swiping that for any otyughs who appear in my D&D game.

<http://images3.wikia.nocookie.net/fi.../7/70/Ochu.jpg>

Topher

JRM

03-09-2009 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Topher (Post 10077176)

*The otyugh and neo-otyugh were among the many many monsters stol...er... *ahem* "borrowed" from D&D for the original Final Fantasy videogame. Monster names got spelled out phonetically in katakana (sometimes resulting in some humorous changes, like the bulette becoming the "baretta" due to the Japanese L/R thing).*

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Topher

Interesting, just going by looks I'm assuming these are plant-monsters rather than the filth loving abominations we know and love. They remind me of 3E's 'Swallow Whole' vegetable monsters, like the Tendriculos or the Greenvices (At least I think it's called greenvices, they're basically ambulatory Venus Fly Traps)

I do like the scorpion-sting shaped arms on the first picture, and the 'tutu' version's nice as well.

I'll have to pop over to the final fantasy wiki and read up on **Ochu**.

Anyway, how can we apply some of this to AD&D otyughs? Maybe the petal-belt is a symbiote?

Hmm...

The Neo-Otyughs of the Cloaca Imperium had grown concerned that their surface allies were constantly distressed by their stench, which caused all manner of diplomatic difficulties. To solve this problem, they invented the Perfumed Petallion, a symbiotic plant they could wear around their waste, which fed off the filth and secretions upon their body and the sunlight of the surface world, and in return emitted a wondrous fragrance that rendered them more pleasant company to be around.

The Military Tentacle of the Cloacal government saw another potential for such creatures, and turned them into living armour, some varieties of which had built-in organic weapons.

Or they're just members of a neo-otyugh ballet company, another failed attempt by the Otyugh Sewer Union to improve their public relations.:D

demiurge1138

03-09-2009 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I never connected ochu with otyughs before! Neat!

Sleeper

03-09-2009 05:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The otyugh (I've always used OH-ti-ugh) as an ambulatory plant is a good fit. Explains their diet (fertilizer), and suits their appearance well. I may use that....

For some reason, and I'm not entirely sure why, the peryton reminds me a bit of the original Greek harpy.

Monsieur Meuble

03-09-2009 08:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Perytons originated a long time ago in an egyptian-like civilisation. They view Human as the reunion of five parts :

- 1°) The Ka, the force of life, the Positive Energy that animate the whole stuff and made it alive.
- 2°) The Ba, the personality, the mind, the ego, generally represented as a bird with a human head.
- 3°) The Akh, the soul, the part of divinity in oneself that go to the Heavens after death.
- 4°) The Khat, the physical body, the one you let behind at death but still must exist because you can't be alive without a body.
- 5°) The Sheut, the shadow. The physical shadow, but also all that is dark in humanity but still necessary to live. You can't cast shadow without being, you can't be without a shadow.

Well, this civilization lived in a very perilous environment (as in : a shitload of monsters eating peasants all the time) and far too much Priests of Life And Death with too much money and too much on their hand for the good of the nation.

So the priests did a lot of experiment with spells of resurrection, reincarnation, undeadification, decorporations... just to cover all figure cases. What if you have lost the body but still have the akh hanging around ? A vampire has everything except Ka, how to compensate for it ? Can an overcautious illithid just extract the Ba of someone and leave the rest to build pyramids... that kind of things.

The Peryton was an experiment on how to ressurect someone killed by Shadows. The Ka has been dispersed, the Ba is shattered, and the Akh and the Khat have been turned into something else that empowers the Sheut into becoming an other Shadow.

So, the idea was to capture the Shadow, graft it on some animal carcass to provide a Khat to the Sheut, hope their will be enough Ba and and Akh to retrieve and repair and cast a normal resurection spell to send some Ka flowing back inside.

Alas, what you obtain itself is that the Shaut is overpowered, the Akh has been destroyed beyond all possibility of saving it, the fractured Ba is completely mad and forgot its humanity and mutated the carcass as a parody of itself, without human head.

So, you have a human shadow directing the body of a souless and mad body of a bird with the head of some mutated roadkill. Ho, and the Resurrection spells worked just fine to reconnect the Ka, so it's vigorously alive.

And, well, as I said, the Priests of Life And Death really had too much time and resources on their hands, so they created and released a whole bunch of the stuff before admitting that, indeed, this methodology would lead nowhere. So let's go back to sheep-mummies with four asses...

Let to themselves, the perytons flew in every directions and, somehow, a minor part of their Ba, their sense of self, went back into existence. Nothing drastic, just something trying telling them to find themselves some Akh to become full and harmonious once again. And so, they began ripping hearts and in doing so, ripping large chunks of soul with it. Once again in possession of a divine spark, their human personality come back to something not unlike their former self, the Sheut stops being the driving part of the entity and collapses back into a simple physical shadow. During the short time it is self conscious, the Peryton hates itself for what it has become and what crimes it committed and seeks to stop being Conscious. The best way to do so is by reproduction. The Peryton so seeks a sexual partner, feeds it a heart to rend it conscious, self-loathing and agreeable to the idea of secreting out thoss souls that make them so conscious of their crimes, and so the male sends the residual Akh, Ba and Sheut of the devoured human victims into the reproductive apparel of the female who does the same and injects them in some eggs containing all the Ka and Khat necessary to them to become alive as per normal reproduction, and well, lays them. The parents, Akh-less once again, go back to insanity and their sheut goes back as the main part of the psyche and so retake the form of a Shadow.

In the egg, the remains of Akh and Ba are slowly transformed into Shadow material by the reinforced sheut and so, well, the peryton is born soulless, with the fractured ego of the dude who got his heart ripped out and a dominant bad side. And it wants to rip hearts to attain completeness and once complete will want to go back to oblivion once again.

So, funny thing : if you got your heart ripped and eaten by a peryton and then get resurrected (why not ? The peryton rips just a large chunk of your soul, not all of it and what is left will grow back...), in a few months or year, there will be peryton who, when complete, will call itself by your name and have bits of your memory and, if you are notorious enough, will hear about you and seeks you and will try to use you to put an end to his calvary for good, one way or another. Will you have to balls to kills what is essentially a part of yourself, a mutated, insane and repentant part but a part nonetheless ? Or will you try to Save it and perhaps find a way to maintain it complete and souled for good ? After all, if you do not play nice, it knows all the secret you had at the moment you got your heart ripped out by its parent, and it is insane...

Naxuul

03-09-2009 09:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10077733)

Interesting, just going by looks I'm assuming these are plant-monsters rather than the filth loving abominations we know and love.

Yeah, Ochus are the premiere Final Fantasy plant monster, next to Marlboros which are like their mean epic cousin(I'd love to see a D&Dized Marlboro, because what would be more bastard DM like than a monster that spews every status effect in the book in a big AE?:D). Further into the FF series they usually get spore, pollen, seed and poison attacks.

-Naxuul

JRM

03-10-2009 12:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 10079418)

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-Naxuul

Hmm... well in 3E the equivalent of status effects would be conditions, which include Dead, Dying, Energy Drained, Helpless, Paralysed, Petrified and Unconscious. Your players wouldn't like you very much.:D

Although conditions also include a few positive effects like Invisibility or Incorporeal which would work to their advantage, if only they weren't a dead immobilized block of stone.:o

noisms

03-10-2009 12:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10079034)

So, funny thing : if you got your heart ripped and eaten by a peryton and then get resurrected (why not ? The peryton rips just a large chunk of your soul, not all of it and what is left will grow back...), in a few months or year, there will be peryton who, when complete, will call itself by your name and have bits of your memory and, if you are notorious enough, will hear about you and seeks you and will try to use you to put an end to his calvary for good, one way or another. Will you have to balls to kills what is essentially a part of yourself, a mutated, insane and repentant part but a part nonetheless ? Or will you try to Save it and perhaps find a way to maintain it complete and souled for good ? After all, if you do not play nice, it knows all the secret you had at the moment you got your heart ripped out by its parent, and it is insane...

This is weirdly brilliant and brilliantly weird.

noisms

03-10-2009 02:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Phantom

The Phantom is an interesting monster - I think the only one in the entire book which both cannot be harmed and does not cause harm. Basically a 'ghost' in the sense of the word that we would probably understand it, it is an image, sound or feeling left behind after somebody's death, which causes <i>fear</i> in those who see, hear or feel it.

There's great potential for using a Phantom as part of a huge wild goose chase: what is this mysterious undead being which cannot be turned? How can it be defeated? With, as usual, the corollary that such monster mysteries are pretty difficult to pull off with players who've read the Monstrous Manual. Or of course if you were going to be a little more subtle, you could use it as part of a wider story; a clue or missing-piece-of-the-puzzle in some sort of murder mystery, maybe. "Judging by the position the Phantom is in as it passes through the door, it's clear it was stabbed from behind with a spear... Elementary, my dear Watson."

There is a slight chance that slain characters can become (cause?) Phantoms, an idea which I like very much. You could have a whole sub-quest for the rest of the PCs, where they try to remove the curse afflicting the soul of their dead comrade. Lots of potential for cheese, but also a nice change of pace, perhaps.

Wakboth

03-10-2009 03:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I think the only place I've seen a phantom used was in a 1e adventure from the book *Lords of Darkness* (?), a book filled with short undead-themed adventures.

One of them was a haunted mansion filled with all sorts of ghostly undead - there was a ghost, a phantom, a poltergeist and a haunt, I think, plus probably more usual undead fare. And the function of the phantom was to reveal the players a chunk of the backstory, so they could figure out what was going on.

(The adventure also had a pipe organ powered by a trapped air elemental that had slowly gone mad in its container; if people poked at the organ too much, the elemental burst forth and attacked.)

Sleeper

03-10-2009 05:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10084851)

I think the only place I've seen a phantom used was in a 1e adventure from the book Lords of Darkness (?), a book filled with short undead-themed adventures.

Phantoms first appeared in *A2: Secret of the Slavers Stockade*, along with the boggle, the cloaker, and the haunt.

I like the concept. There should be more encounter-monsters or encounter-traps or just encounter-events/eerie happenings/magical strangeness in D&D. But, well, they're listed as a monster. They're ghostly, and their origin is very similar to other spectral things you can off with a glowing blade or scare off with a cross-like symbol that just happens to resemble a crucifix. Except, well, they're not undead. And nothing works against them. Nothing affects them. Why not? Oh, yes. You're not supposed to use all those neat spells and powers you accumulated over the last 5 or 50 levels. You're just supposed to dance to the GM's set-piece choreographed encounter. Unless you guess the precise spell to cast. And you're 12th-level or higher. And even then, only if you're a priest. Terrible design. A little more interaction and a few sops to players who didn't jump at the chance to ride the fantasy railroad, please.

JRM

03-10-2009 09:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10084645)

Phantom

snip

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I don't believe Phantoms *have* souls in AD&D, they're just an 'echo' of a traumatic death. Which raises the possibility that a PC can die horribly, creating a Phantom, and then be resurrected to watch an action-replay of their death. Also, the MM says "A character who is murdered and generates a phantom may also return as a revenant." Therefore, some deaths can create both a Phantom and an undead! (or should that be a Phantom and a regular undead?)

Phantoms are more like fear-generating set dressing than a proper monster. They can't hurt the PCs, so in my experience they'll eventually be ignored. Of course, as the MM entry mentions, they can aggravate the threat of any fear-immune monsters that happen to be in the area. I tended to use **Haunts** instead, finding their "possessing ghosts seeks to complete an unfinished task" more interesting.

noisms

03-11-2009 12:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10085518)

I don't believe Phantoms have souls in AD&D, they're just an 'echo' of a traumatic death. Which raises the possibility that a PC can die horribly, creating a Phantom, and then be resurrected to watch an action-replay of their death.

Which raises the further possibility: what if a PC died horribly and created a Phantom, was then resurrected and watched the action-replay of their death, only to die horribly *again* during the course of watching said action replay, and create another Phantom, which would be forever locked into watching the death of the first Phantom over and over again? And so forth unto infinity.

YojimboC

03-11-2009 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The phantom strikes me as a special effect, something that might get a paragraph in a module or DMG, but hardly needs a whole page in the MM.

Sleeper

03-11-2009 04:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10086195)

Which raises the further possibility: what if a PC died horribly and created a Phantom, was then resurrected and watched the action-replay of their death, only to die horribly again during the course of watching said action replay, and create another Phantom, which would be forever locked into watching the death of the first Phantom over and over again? And so forth unto infinity.

That would be a bit contrived, *unless* it was one of the prerequisites for some kind of powerful ritual or incantation. Perhaps a grand ceremony, using mirrors as a theme. The gates of the otherworld open at midnight, and the corrupted spirits of the restless dead are given egress through reflective surfaces. They crawl out of still ponds and tinted glass, and down the throats of those unlucky or unwise enough to glimpse their own reflections. The possession isn't visible from the outside, and the spirits retain the basic memories of the possessed. Depending on the range, the countryside is soon swamped by normal peasants doing wicked things to their families and neighbors, and the city is overwhelmed with mad acts and fire. If the effect lasts through the witching hour, sufficient chaos would wake those who would otherwise be asleep, and lead to even more mortals being affected.

Another alternative for the phantom is to play on the idea of the echo. In the modern era, we tend to say someone died when their heart stops, even if they're successfully resuscitated. What about the magical equivalent? What if someone is revived before the soul departs the body? I forget how long it takes, but I believe the original *Deities & Demigods* and at least one of the 3E splatbooks touched on the subject. There's even a resurrection spell that must be cast immediately, squirreled away somewhere.

So what happens when a someone dies, creates a phantom, and is immediately revived? Perhaps the echo becomes linked to the restored body, instead of being tied to an area. The effect might be omnipresent, or might only come out when the resurrectee sleeps. Imagine coming across a sleeping figure, with a spectral paladin standing astride his body and fighting off the ghostly legions of hell, only, in the end, to be torn to pieces by the fiends. Then as the gore dissipates, the luminescent armored figure rises again from the sleeping form, and the scene starts all over from the beginning. If the slumbering traveler is awakened, the images suddenly vanish. If it only happened recently, the paladin might be suspicious of anyone who claims to have witnessed anything so outlandish, and might be very suspicious of anyone who can recount the exact circumstances of his last death. If it happened a while ago, the paladin might be a sad outcast, forced to sleep in the wilderness because nobody wants to bed down near someone who blasts the TV when they sleep.

Inyssiur

03-11-2009 06:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Even if it stays in one place, that would be pretty interesting. The palace of King Lieben, haunted by his distraught specter after night falls--and if it terrifies his guests and staff, think how it must affect Lieben himself!

Or no, if it *doesn't* faze the man... imagine it. The king begins looking ill. Pale. Jaundiced. More and more over time, he withdraws to his private quarters. His duties are let slide, or are conducted in a barely satisfactory fashion by his desperate-seeming second in command. As he begins to disappear from the public eye, *eccentric* figures begin furtively slipping into and out of his rooms at all hours of the night. As weeks or even days pass, he disappears from view entirely. His visitors grow more outlandish, their numbers increasing, and stay in his chambers for prolonged periods of time. His staff receives increasingly bizarre and specific orders--demands for strange herbs, new or repositioned furniture, unnecessary-seeming renovations, many things boiled in clean water, even strange heathen artifacts and *live animals* for his strangest visitors.

And then, in the dead of night--or, perhaps worse, on Sunday morning--an armed contingent of soldiers is dispatched to the great church. The archbishop (always the king's most outspoken friend and admirer) and his highest-ranking clergy are rounded up and abducted, at swordpoint if necessary, by visibly uneasy soldiers and their practically shellshocked commander.

The king's staff are barred from his castle. Two days pass. Terrible sounds echo from the spire; unearthly lights burn and dance in the king's window.

The clergy return to the Church, wild-eyed and pale, exhausted and shaken. A strange light gleams in the archbishop's eyes. For a long time after, their sermons are stilted and strange.

And the king returns to his duties, perfectly healthy and acting as though nothing has happened. He refuses absolutely to speak of what happened in his absence.

And when night falls, in the castle... well.

Monsieur Meuble

03-11-2009 07:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

How great : the astronomers / astrologers / diviners of all around the world are unanimous and glad to announce that, tonight and for two weeks, the planet will come across a particularly large field of stardust that hasn't been crossed since millenniums ! Two weeks of non-stop and magnificent falling stars. Kingdoms and Cities everywhere have declared festivities and holidays for what is seen by most temples as a particularly good omen from Heavens.

And just as the mayor is waiting the first falling star to announce to the crowd the official beginning of the Falling Star Festival, a sinister aster appears in the sky, like the passed image of the moon but... littler. Farer. Nonetheless, the whole crowd is anxiously captivated at the sight of the orb that wasn't there an instant before. And at the exact moment the first asteroid consumes itself in the sky, the globe explodes and the horrified screams of millions are heard before being stopped forever. Or, hum, well, they would be, if those phantomatic screams weren't drowned in the panicked and far more enduring screams of the million of people all around the planet shitting themselves in unison. And, well, twhen I said they stopped forever... I meant, except they come back twenty minutes later, when the whole "a planet appears and explode" thing repeat itself in a loop. That is, until the moment the phantom falls behind the horizon. But the next night, it will be back, and the apparition will seems closer... Well, it would seems closer, if you took the time to look at it, instead of having to flip out like everyone else, or to fight your way in a city where the whole population running everywhere in a frenzied panic, breaking, burning, hurting, trampling and killing everything on its path, and as doomsday cults spontaneously appear and, well, even during the day when the sinister apparition is out of sight, they do not participate to put happiness in those festivities.

The day after, the Local University Of Magic calls for every mid- to high-level characters in town, as they need investigators and adventurers with a practice of the weird and a high-than-normal chance to not running around like chickens tonight. The astronomers have three theories about this thing is, and they can't verify them, because they can't look at the phenomenon and take the necessary measures without panicking or having an heart-attack, and without precise data, they can't calculate what it is supposed to be, and golems can't be motivated to learn the basics of advanced thaumatoastronomy. So, measures must be taken to verify on this planet what hypothesis is the correct one, and how to advert the consequences.

The hypothesis are as follow :

-The planet we see is closer than what we think, it is actually a moon and for what is knows of astronomy in the setting, it would have been a moon of this planet. It would be the "best case" hypothesis and it can be "easily" verified : searching in the texts and ruins of ancient civilizations if this world once had one more moon that got destroyed. Things like aboleths could probably answer directly, but is it really such a good idea to ask them ? And if so, how is it that this moon was so densely populated that it generates such a phantom ? What destroyed it ? Who were those selenites ? What artifact of such a space-faring civilization can be retrieved, floating among the stardust of their former world ?

-The planet is a planet-sized planet, indeed. It is the least easily provable hypothesis and the second best and worst one, because, for all we known, What destroyed this planet and had the means to is still around here and can strike at OUR planet too. Or not. Inquiries around races with supposed or legendary space-faring capacities can be of use here. Those races with "we come from a giant empire coming from the stars and we crashed our space-boats on this

planet a long time ago and are waiting for the rescue mission" as a core of their tradition include illithids, beholders, neogis and *gasp* tinker gnomes. Perhaps they do have, somewhere, engraved on the walls of a temple where the altar is a sunken spelljammer, are the remains of a stellar map indicating an unknown planet that would orbit around here. (the map could also mention of Groth The Monster-Star Of Doom that travels the systems and destroy planets for food or fun...)

-The worst-case hypothesis : bits of calculus by an astronomer who had an attack before being able to verify them implies that the phantom have the exact dimensions of our planet and that this world and the apparition will coincide in a week or something, and so, this is actually an image from the future. As in : this planet will be destroyed and everyone will die. It should normally be easy to disprove the hypothesis by comparing a cartographic globe of our world and the phantom and see if they look alike, but, well, cartography sucks and there is no correct and complete map of the planet, and anyway, no one can look closely enough to the apparition to compare with dying from fear. On the other hand, if correct, it will prove itself true quickly as it will seem to go for collision course. Of course, if someone could stop who or what is about to destroy the planet, that would be really smooth !

And so the quest for answers and salvation begins, groups of adventurers crossing the distances on a planet in the grip of fear and panic, trying to find traces of space-faring races, cosmic menaces, earth-shattering conspiracies and way out of here, and fleeing from fearful masses by night and insane doomsday cultists trying to stop their "blasphemies" by day.

And each night in the sky, they can see what can be the end of the world, and shudder...

psychojosh13

03-11-2009 01:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've been inconsistent in my reading of this thread and its ancestors, so could someone please fill me in about PETA Girl? Is this someone who posted earlier, or a fictional character who exists to fight in the defense of those poor, abused owlbears, or what?

Inyssius

03-11-2009 01:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by psychojosh13 (Post 10089219)

I've been inconsistent in my reading of this thread and its ancestors, so could someone please fill me in about PETA Girl? Is this someone who posted earlier, or a fictional character who exists to fight in the defense of those poor, abused owlbears, or what?

Looking at the real-life animal entries, a *certain trend* emerges. Dolphins, for example, are described as practically **radiating** goodness (or so I gather). Certain descriptions seem kind of, um, biased a little. :D It's enough to make one wonder what sort of person must be writing these particular entries...

noisms

03-11-2009 02:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by psychojosh13 (Post 10089219)

I've been inconsistent in my reading of this thread and its ancestors, so could someone please fill me in about PETA Girl? Is this someone who posted earlier, or a fictional character who exists to fight in the defense of those poor, abused owlbeats, or what?

I made her up early on in the first thread, I think even before the Dolphin entry, as a way of explaining the weird and amusing way in which the MM seeks to paint real-world animals with a huge whitewashing brush. The Wolf and Whale entries are the best examples of this, but the Dolphin one is probably the oddest (not only are dolphins lawful good - which they certainly wouldn't be if D&D had been written by tuna fish - but the average one is *more intelligent than the average human*).

In my mind, PETA girl is a teenage girl, perhaps the daughter or neice of one of the writers or editors, probably a vegan, who has an inordinately rosey view of animals and who makes sure all the writers conform to her idea of how the animal entries should be.

JRM

03-11-2009 04:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10089361)

In my mind, PETA girl is a teenage girl, perhaps the daughter or neice of one of the writers or editors, probably a vegan, who has an inordinately rosey view of animals and who makes sure all the writers conform to her idea of how the animal entries should be.

Well I suspect that with PETA girl, it's only the *pretty* animals she views that way. There sure are a lot of nasty ugly animals in AD&D's MMs. :D

noisms

03-11-2009 04:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10089665)

Well I suspect that with PETA girl, it's only the pretty animals she views that way. There sure are a lot of nasty ugly animals in AD&D's MMs. :D

That's true. There's nothing down for the insects in PETA girl's world!

JRM

03-11-2009 06:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10089672)

That's true. There's nothing down for the insects in PETA girl's world!

And no love for the Otyugh.:(

:p

EDIT: Unless she was the one responsible for putting cute tutus of petals on otyughs and turning them into oculus.;

demiurge1138

03-12-2009 02:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10089672)

That's true. There's nothing down for the insects in PETA girl's world!

And the octopus, noble, intelligent soul that it is... made Neutral Evil!

Wakboth

03-12-2009 02:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10091602)

And the octopus, noble, intelligent soul that it is... made Neutral Evil!

PETA Girl doesn't fear the vengeance of the octopus, however; she's hiding out in Germany.

chronostrike

03-12-2009 05:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10091618)

PETA Girl doesn't fear the vengeance of the octopus, however; she's hiding out in Germany.

<http://www.pikeman327.com/pics/iseewhatyouididthere.jpg>

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10087808)

Even if it stays in one place, that would be pretty interesting. The palace of King Lieben, haunted by his distraught specter after night falls--and if it terrifies his guests and staff, think how it must affect Lieben himself!

Or no, if it doesn't faze the man... imagine it. The king begins looking ill. Pale. Jaundiced. More and more over time, he withdraws to his private quarters. His duties are let slide, or are conducted in a barely satisfactory fashion by his desperate-seeming second in command. As he begins to disappear from the public eye, eccentric figures begin furtively slipping into and out of his rooms at all hours of the night. As weeks or even days pass, he disappears from view entirely. His visitors grow more outlandish, their numbers increasing, and stay in his chambers for prolonged periods of time. His staff receives increasingly bizarre and specific orders--demands for strange herbs, new or repositioned furniture, unnecessary-seeming renovations, many things boiled in clean water, even strange heathen artifacts and live animals for his strangest visitors.

And then, in the dead of night--or, perhaps worse, on Sunday morning--an armed contingent of soldiers is dispatched to the great church. The archbishop (always the king's most outspoken friend and admirer) and his highest-ranking clergy are rounded up and abducted, at swordpoint if necessary, by visibly uneasy soldiers and their practically shellshocked commander.

The king's staff are barred from his castle. Two days pass. Terrible sounds echo from the spire; unearthly lights burn and dance in the king's window.

The clergy return to the Church, wild-eyed and pale, exhausted and shaken. A strange light gleams in the archbishop's eyes. For a long time after, their sermons are stilted and strange.

And the king returns to his duties, perfectly healthy and acting as though nothing has happened. He refuses absolutely to speak of what happened in his absence.

And when night falls, in the castle... well.

This is suitably creepy and awesome on toast, but I don't follow. What's going on here?

demiurge1138

03-12-2009 05:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10092250)

This is suitably creepy and awesome on toast, but I don't follow. What's going on here?

Whew. Glad I'm not the only one.

Inyssius

03-12-2009 07:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10092250)

This is suitably creepy and awesome on toast, but I don't follow. What's going on here?

Okay, so the respected and powerful king gets ill. Really ill. He withdraws from the public eye, spending more and more time--well, being ill. He can't actually come out and say "hey, I'm really sick here", because that's generally equivalent to saying "hey, let's everyone have a long drawn-out fight over what happens when I die!" In any case, word of his illness spreads in dire whispers instead of royal proclamations.

In any case, he's attended--around the clock, when needed--by the best doctors in the land. As discreetly as possible, of course. And then, when they prove useless, the best doctors his men can find in other lands. Over time, the net is widened from "respectable European doctors" to "brilliant but a little weird Greek doctors" through "shaman Mongo, who the Seven Tribes say can cure any sickness".

Well, it doesn't work. The king dies. In a last-ditch effort, his men are sent to the Church. And the Church manages to resurrect him.

Resurrection magic--going to the afterlife and yanking someone's soul out of it, then jamming it back into the corpse--in *any* vaguely medium- or low-magic setting ought to be a pretty daunting affair; and the custom in all the groups I've been in is generally that revived people Don't Talk About It.

So: the priests resurrect him; the process freaks them the hell out, because you don't see stuff like that happening every day; and the whole thing is profoundly creepy to everyone who doesn't get anything like the whole story (and some of the very few people who do).

If that's not enough, a death as messed up as the king's (and no doubt the healers didn't help in making his last hours as weird as possible, what with desperate heathen rituals and holy water and last-ditch "Balancing of the Humors" and so forth) could very well create a Phantom. Because a bloodstained, panicked, diseased king-spectre is just what every palace needs... even if the actual king in question isn't dead any more.

sim_james

03-12-2009 10:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10091602)

And the octopus, noble, intelligent soul that it is... made Neutral Evil!

Not in my worlds!

noisms

03-12-2009 08:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Talk amongst yourselves. The Pheonix will be unleashed soon. Bit busy.

JRM

03-13-2009 09:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10094816)

Talk amongst yourselves. The Pheonix will be unleashed soon. Bit busy.

I've been robbed! Where's my obligatory 'rise from the ashes' quip?!:o

noisms

03-13-2009 09:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Phoenix

A long entry for a monster which isn't so often used, and *another* mythological being - is it just me or does this section of the MM have a huge preponderance of these?

As with many very powerful, very good creatures, I find it hard to know at what point a Phoenix should appear in a game, even though I like them. They suffer the old Lamia/Coatl/Shedu/Gold Dragon problem: you don't want to use them as a DM's policeman to punish 'bad' PC behaviour, and you don't want to use them as a deus ex machina for getting PCs out of difficult situations, and nor do you want to use them as a walking quest dispenser. So how exactly *do* you use one?

Anyway, there's a lot of information on Phoenix powers (they can cast a heck of a lot of spells, heal with their wings and comb, and self-immolate kamikaze style), and a fair bit of the kind of ecology/things-that-'sages'-say that we know and love. I'm particularly interested in the idea that evil cultures believe that Phoenix are the symbol of death and destruction; does that mean there are evil Phoenix out there, or are the evil cultures just grabbing the wrong end of the stick?

Phoenix body parts are all useful, and I suppose this is where an adventure hook might come in. The entry only mentions that the feathers can be used to make *staves of healing* and *potions of extra healing*, but apparently even the beaks, talons and so forth can be used, and are often worth up to 5,000 gps. It's hard to imagine how you could get your hands on such things, though - because a Phoenix faced with the prospect of death will surely self-immolate, destroy its attackers, and live on in its new form.

noisms

03-13-2009 10:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10098004)
I've been robbed! Where's my obligatory 'rise from the ashes' quip?!:o

Don't worry, the thread has well and truly now risen from said remains of fire.

SuperG

03-13-2009 12:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

Phoenix

A long entry for a monster which isn't so often used, and another mythological being - is it just me or does this section of the MM have a huge preponderance of these?

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...yeah, I think we all know that a Dark Phoenix is definately a symbol of death and destruction.

Sleeper

03-13-2009 01:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by SuperG (Post 10098480)

...yeah, I think we all know that a Dark Phoenix is definately a symbol of death and destruction.

I thought it was more a symbol of the unfettered freedom gained by rejecting traditional social mores. :)

Anyway, the phoenix is good for cage fights with oiled solars when the Higher Powers of Good and Law get bored and just want to kick back and watch some trashy entertainment.

JRM

03-13-2009 07:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098072)

Don't worry, the thread has well and truly now risen from said remains of fire.

Thanks, now I feel suitably vindicated.;

Anyhows, getting back to the Phoenix vis à vis adventure ideas.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

Phoenix

As with many very powerful, very good creatures, I find it hard to know at what point a Phoenix should appear in a game, even though I like them. They suffer the old Lamia/Coatl/Shedu/Gold Dragon problem: you don't want to use them as a DM's policeman to punish 'bad' PC behaviour, and you don't want to use them as a deus ex machina for getting PCs out of difficult situations, and nor do you want to use them as a walking quest dispenser. So how exactly do you use one?

Well as mentioned in those threads you refer to, there's always the "save the nice guy" or "call on the nice guy" solution. Maybe the phoenix dies and for some reason it's now an egg instead of a young bird, so the party must take it to the Sacred Fire of Rebirth before the evil opposition can destroy the helpless Phoenix? Similarly, they're not immune to petrification, paralysis and the like, so the traditional Evil Archmage may have got in a lucky spell that rendered Phoenix helpless then imprisoning it in an icy fortress, from which it needs rescue - clearly the archmage wouldn't want to kill the bird, since it would just have an incendiary rebirth.

Similarly, the local city may be facing some ghastly threat and need the party to find their stolen scroll of *Call Phoenix* (there's even a write-up for the spell in the Monstrous Manual), so they may call upon it to save them from the ice ghosts or whatever menaces them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

I'm particularly interested in the idea that evil cultures believe that Phoenix are the symbol of death and destruction; does that mean there are evil Phoenix out there, or are the evil cultures just grabbing the wrong end of the stick?

Well it's a matter of point of view. Imagine you're an orc and your capital was laid waste by this huge bird that landed in the courtyard of Gruumsh's temple and then **exploded** and I think you can see why they could associate the phoenix with death and destruction (and burning and screaming).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

Phoenix body parts are all useful, and I suppose this is where an adventure hook might come in. The entry only mentions that the feathers can be used to make staffs of healing and potions of extra healing, but apparently even the beaks, talons and so forth can be used, and are often worth up to 5,000 gps. It's hard to imagine how you could get your hands on such things, though - because a Phoenix faced with the prospect of death will surely self-immolate, destroy its attackers, and live on in its new form.

Looking at the MM entry on Phoenix's, I note the the entry on body parts says "*Of course it is not always easy to find a buyer on the open market, because many cultures consider it a bad omen or taboo violation to kill a phoenix.*", while Habitat/Society says that when a phoenix dies of old age and births a new one "*Legend then suggests that the phoenix must fly away to the temple of the sun and there bury the mummified corpse of its parent.*"

To me, that implies a self-immolating phoenix may leave some remains (if only feathers), so all you need is attackers who are sufficiently resistant to fire. Nearly all the phoenix's combat powers are based on fire (they've got *color spray*, *veil* and some dispel powers, but no damage-dealing non-fire spells), so a hypothetical phoenix-hunter just needs to hire a few immune to fire monsters to hunt it down.

Hmm, forget about hunters, how about jailors. If the evil archmage could imprison a phoenix (they'd need to block its astral and ethereal travel abilities somehow), then they can use it as an endless source of body parts, harvested by the archmage's fire giant servants. I would have added salamanders, but the phoenix could cast *dispel evil* or *dismissal* on them.

Kakita Kojiro

03-13-2009 10:22 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

As with many very powerful, very good creatures, I find it hard to know at what point a Phoenix should appear in a game, even though I like them. They suffer the old Lamia/Coatl/Shedu/Gold Dragon problem: you don't want to use them as a DM's policeman to punish 'bad' PC behaviour, and you don't want to use them as a deus ex machina for getting PCs out of difficult situations, and nor do you want to use them as a walking quest dispenser. So how exactly do you use one?

Although "quest dispenser" seems quite appropriate for a phoenix, this is really another iteration of the Lancelot Problem: in Pendragon, your players want to interact with the Famous Knights, to see them doing the things they do, but what Lancelot does is to upstage other knights, which is no fun for the PC knights watching the GM play things out.

The solution I've found is to set up the uber-NPC as an ally of the PCs... and then to hit 'em with an encounter for which they're *way* outclassed. Then, hand the uber-NPC to the players to run, and have at them. Never fails in getting the players both happy to see their ally, *and* satisfied that they're not being overshadowed by a GMPC.

Of course, the phoenix has so many high-level spells as powers that it'd be a difficult balancing act to finagle a challenging encounter that doesn't end up as a TPK. But, heck, if you're TPK'd with a phoenix, the DM has plenty of justification for bringing you *all* back... that's kind of the phoenix schtick. (... despite what X-Men fanbois might complain of.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

Anyway, there's a lot of information on Phoenix powers (they can cast a heck of a lot of spells, heal with their wings and comb, and self-immolate kamikaze style), and a fair bit of the kind of ecology/things-that-'sages'-say that we know and love. I'm particularly interested in the idea that evil cultures believe that Phoenix are the symbol of death and destruction; does that mean there are evil Phoenix out there, or are the evil cultures just grabbing the wrong end of the stick?

I always thought that the idea of "the other egg of the Phoenix" from the *Sandman* "Arabian Nights" story would be cool to explore. In essence, when the phoenix immolates itself in its nest, it has laid *two* eggs -- one hatches and the phoenix is reborn; no one knows what hatches out of the other egg.

Having the phoenix's *death* hatch out of the other egg, while its *life* gets born from the twin, seems quite appropriate.

DMH

03-13-2009 11:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

But what to call the death version? Bennu bird doesn't sound right (though it is the Egyptian name for the creature-- the Greeks changed it to phoenix).

Is there any other mythological birds that might fit the bill?

sim_james

03-14-2009 12:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

There was the time that I placed a Phoenix's Grave inside a Maze (Planescape campaign).

It took the form of a bonfire that radiated heat, but did not seem to consume or burn anything. The PCs could walk right up to the brink and singe not a hair on their heads.

Naturally one of the PCs stepped into the flame (resisting another who was trying to drag him away) and was immediately immolated, and quickly burned to nothing. I told the player that his character could feel his body being consumed but felt warmth rather than burning, and felt no pain.

Had the PC doubted, he could have stepped out of the bonfire, and been horribly burned. Instead, he remained in the flames until he was utterly consumed.

Shortly afterwards, ash drifting down on a breeze settled to the ground and began to take the form of the lost PC, alive

and asleep. He now wore a cloak of phoenix feathers.

Kakita Kojiro

03-14-2009 01:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10100102)
Is there any other mythological birds that might fit the bill?

Sure, there are plenty of other variants on the phoenix concept: Chinese *feng-huang*, Japanese *hou-ou*, Persian *simorgh*, Russian *zhar-ptitsa*, etc., etc.

Some already adapted into D&D in [unfortunate ways](#), though...

However, I'd be inclined to have the other egg hatch something that is the *anti*-phoenix -- darkness and death and evil instead of fire and life and good. Call it the "nightbird" or something.

KoboldLord

03-14-2009 03:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms
As with many very powerful, very good creatures, I find it hard to know at what point a Phoenix should appear in a game, even though I like them. They suffer the old Lamia/Coatl/Shedu/Gold Dragon problem: you don't want to use them as a DM's policeman to punish 'bad' PC behaviour, and you don't want to use them as a deus ex machina for getting PCs out of difficult situations, and nor do you want to use them as a walking quest dispenser. So how exactly do you use one?

You use them the same way you use all good creatures: as slaves of the BBEGs. 3e has the Planar Binding line of spells for exactly this purpose, but even in the red box basic you could do the job manually. Angels tend to have an excellent suite of spell-like abilities if you need shock trooper cannon fodder to oppress the peasantry and stall those pesky adventurers, and what evil enchanter wouldn't love being pulled in a chariot by a pair of mind-slaved shedu or silver dragons?

In the case of the phoenix, imagine if the forge rooms in Snurre's hall had an enslaved phoenix instead of the two trolls. Bound by Eclavdra's foul magic, the bird's tears are used to quench the weapons forged by the giants, and the burning blood it drips from its chains used to etch intricate designs to glorify the giants' campaign of conquest and destruction. Naturally, the bird is magically compelled to attack trespassers to the best of its ability, even if those trespassers are PCs trying to save it. If it kills itself by immolation, the enslavement will pass to its offspring, and if the PCs kill it they have permanently slain an exemplar of goodness.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Phoenixes are stars. Really. Well, more exactly, it is a representation/avatar kind of thing that star that can't afford to have planets with life and stuff sends on living planets to see the beauty of it and preserve it. After all, some Phoenix can be the sun of planets were life extinguished itself or was destroyed by outside forces. Perhaps was it even their actions, like a too loud cosmic wind or whatever that destroyed it and now they are in a quest for repentance.

So, when a phoenix have to self immolate to reborn, it is actually a reflect of when the star have to stop fusionning an element and must pass to the other.

And alas, it works the other way too : when a phoenix is forced to sacrifice itself, the star itself is forced to go to the next step of its evolution and so, ultimately, to its heat-death... So, yeah killing enough times a phoenix can really kill it in the end. It and a whole solar system. But, in normal occasions, when a phoenix feels its star is about to die for real, it just fly of the planet and into deep space, perhaps to see the galaxy as a whole one last time. Or, perhaps, because the phoenix of a black hole or a neutron star is akin to an atropal, a creature of god-like powers all focused on the destruction and absorption of all life, all energy and all heat, to turn them into Death and Entropy. And so a bad thing to have near a living planet when, well, you still love life.

So... What happens when sun hating, life destroying bad dudes learn about it ? When they start tormenting a phoenix all over the planet to generate a Death Phoenix ? Or when a space-faring evil race of mad monsters (okay, Illithides) debark on the planet to hunt them all, as they do all around the universe, to accelerate the death-heat of the universe ? Or when they try to summon the phoenix of the sun of this here planet ?

Zartes

03-14-2009 04:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10098033)

As with many very powerful, very good creatures, I find it hard to know at what point a Phoenix should appear in a game, even though I like them. They suffer the old Lamia/Coatl/Shedu/Gold Dragon problem: you don't want to use them as a DM's policeman to punish 'bad' PC behaviour, and you don't want to use them as a deus ex machina for getting PCs out of difficult situations, and nor do you want to use them as a walking quest dispenser. So how exactly do you use one?

I agree wholeheartedly. Which is why, these days, I have a policy of "Good doesn't have to mean *nice*. Unicorns are wonderful mounts... so long as you've got a virgin around to keep it under control. Otherwise they try to GORE and EAT people. Nothing personal, they just represent sexual innocence, so they take offense to people who, well, aren't.

To use a pheonix in such a way, perhaps they represent cycles of death and rebirth... so they actually encourage, or at least try to stop PCs from discouraging, disasters from which the kingdom can recover... but will take several years doing.

(as a bonus, a pheonix being the altimate cause of widespread flooding isn't something most players would expect)

JRM

03-14-2009 08:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Zartes (Post 10103748)

I agree wholeheartedly. Which is why, these days, I have a policy of "Good doesn't have to mean nice. Unicorns are wonderful mounts... so long as you've got a virgin around to keep it under control. Otherwise they try to GORE and EAT people. Nothing personal, they just represent sexual innocence, so they take offense to people who, well, aren't.

Well to my mind in D&D Good doesn't have to mean *nice* but they have to be moral. What you're describing seems more Neutral in D&D terms (i.e. amoral personifications of purity, or fiery destruction or rebirth).

When I think of "good but not nice" monsters I imagine more 'Angels of Vengeance' type beings who punish or destroy major sinners, or a society that deals with its evil members by using enchantment spells and psychic surgery to literally change their minds - ("Sid the Sinner may have lost half his mind, but he's not evil anymore"). That's more of a "Lawful Good but not nice" (and verging towards LN) example.

Now what would a "Chaotic Good but not nice" society be like? One where select individual "heroes" are free to torment, curse, rob or attack evil characters as the mood takes them?

Sleeper

03-14-2009 10:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

You can have moral* and upstanding characters who behave in intolerant fashion and act harshly against those who violate that code, but I think that steps outside what D&D's alignment is designed to handle. Lobotomizing someone because they behave in a fashion you find repugnant or killing and eating someone just because they've had sex don't easily fit into a universal standard of goodness. They might raise interesting moral quandries, but alignment is really just a way of saying "people painted with *this* color are okay to kill".

*In the sense that they follow a clear-cut code of morality, not in the sense that they follow *your* moral code.

JRM

03-15-2009 02:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10104300)

You can have moral and upstanding characters who behave in intolerant fashion and act harshly against those who violate that code, but I think that steps outside what D&D's alignment is designed to handle. Lobotomizing someone because they behave in a fashion you find repugnant or killing and eating someone just because they've had sex don't easily fit into a universal standard of goodness. They might raise interesting moral quandries, but alignment is really just a way of saying "people painted with *this* color are okay to kill".*

**In the sense that they follow a clear-cut code of morality, not in the sense that they follow your moral code.*

Ah yes, but where do you draw the line and how do you shade the goodness? Is it better to execute some "dyed in the wool Evil" creature or imprison them for life, when you could tinker with their minds to make them a valuable member of society? I deliberately mentioned some loss of intellect to imply that it's not a very nice thing to do (it's definitely more Lawful than Good), but what if they have a Helm of Reversing Alignment. That causes no loss of facilities, it's just a "*Poof*" you're now LG instead of CE" item.

Admittedly, that's an awful silly item. I only used it once, back in my callow youth.:cool:

EDIT: I'm reminded of a classic episode of Star Trek where they visit a lunatic asylum containing some of the handful of people remaining in the federation with forms of criminal insanity that didn't have an established cure, in order to give them a new treatment.

Now obviously it raises issues of individual liberty and freedom of will, but would a Lawful Good creature necessary place the highest emphasis on that, or would they insist on conformity for the common good?

I'm still trying to think of good examples of a "not nice" CG creature, and the best I'm coming up with is the prankster-type (Gnome Illusionists, Kender etc) who torment evil creatures until their lives are a misery.

Sleeper

03-15-2009 03:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10104901)

Ah yes, but where do you draw the line and how do you shade the goodness?

From years of observing internet discussions on the subject, anything that fits a modern vaguely humanist moral perspective (most historical figures -- like Orlando the "paladin" -- are heavily whitewashed to paint them into the appropriate corner).

If it's a fuzzy corner case, alignment is the wrong tool. It's like a bunch of boys playing a pickup game of shirts and skins, and then arguing about which team someone belongs to if they're wearing a bandana or an apron. Where the boundary is drawn is entirely irrelevant, because the actual point is to create an easy tool to identify a pre-defined grouping.

JRM

03-15-2009 05:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10105120)

From years of observing internet discussions on the subject, anything that fits a modern vaguely humanist moral perspective (most historical figures -- like Orlando the "paladin" -- are heavily whitewashed to paint them into the appropriate corner).

If it's a fuzzy corner case, alignment is the wrong tool. It's like a bunch of boys playing a pickup game of shirts and skins, and then arguing about which team someone belongs to if they're wearing a bandana or an apron. Where the boundary is drawn is entirely irrelevant, because the actual point is to create an easy tool to identify a pre-defined grouping.

Well from my years of observing internet discussions about D&D alignment, they usually don't lead anywhere, just a lot of argument about subjective opinions regarding what a multiverse with objective Good and Evil (plus Law and Chaos) would actually be like. It can raise a lot of interesting points, but also a lot of tears.

Still, it was something to do while we wait for Noisms to get around to the Piercer.:o

Monsieur Meuble

03-15-2009 05:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10104901)

I'm still trying to think of good examples of a "not nice" CG creature, and the best I'm coming up with is the prankster-type (Gnome Illusionists, Kender etc) who torment evil creatures until their lives are a misery.

A "freedom fighter", rebelling against evil authorities. Rebelling violently and efficiently. Like, placing horribly efficient magic-traps on the path of the troop of fantasy-nazis. All dead. Never saw this coming. Would one of them have been good, too bad, it better had to not stay with those bastards.

The hard-boiled detective, who play by own rules, is defiant of the police, will kick large amount of asses and probably kill the bad guy who corrupted the whole of the city in his office with a bullet between the eyes while he was gloating, but will never punch a dame, and do it for the good cause, even though he will never admit it while sober.

The hero with no hold barred in his fight against Evil. A relentless agent of justice and retribution, and will make everything on its path stand aside OR ELSE ! He will fight dirty and there will be surprise, traps and betrayal, and, well, okay, a berserk trance. But if he can, he will harm no innocent. Just punch them unconscious if they become worrisome...

Docteur House. Definitely a force of goodness, indeed. And such a potent one that you can't ignore him. And he knows it and he wants you to know it, and he will be a pest all along so you learn it's frankly better to not have to ask for help from the not-nice high-level cleric, next time. Especially if you are not cooperative, because he will break in your lair and exact all kind of mental cruelty on you until you become cooperative and he will be able to do all the Good you couldn't be arsed to try to do by yourself.

The cunning nobleman. Yeah, yeah, sure, of course he is lawful. After all, isn't he a noble head of state ? So, lawful. Trust him. Yeah, okay, he may lie to its counselor (well, seeing as some of them are traitors to the Enemy, it's a necessity) and he does a lot of secret police actions (the Enemy is not acting in the light either !) and will employ preferably and secretly adventurers of ambiguous alignment than his loyal and trusty order of paladins (who, for all the zeal they have in their deeds, aren't as flexible and will not do anything to protect the people !), and, well, okay, he may not be exactly THAT lawful, but at least he is Good and he will do what must be done so his people live free and safe an other day !

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10105632)

A "freedom fighter", rebelling against evil authorities. Rebelling violently and efficiently. Like, placing horribly efficient magic-traps on the path of the troop of fantasy-nazis. All dead. Never saw this coming. Would one of them have been good, too bad, it better had to not stay with those bastards.

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Good examples. You could include somebody like the BFG in there too, maybe. He's basically good, but if you're a bad kid he's happy to give you horrible nightmares.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Piercer

Another of the dungeon-ecology monsters, Piercers are the kind of being that couldn't survive without adventurers. Apparently they're a kind of gastropod whose shell is so hard and sharp that it can pierce armour.

Basically resembling a stalactite and sometimes measuring up to six feet long, Piercers are the definition of a one-trick pony: they try to drop on you from a cave ceiling, but if they miss, they're screwed. The best they can do is secrete an almost harmless acid in an effort to scare you away. However, as there may be ten or more in a single cavern dropping almost simultaneously - or even hundreds, if the rumours are true - you could still find yourself in trouble if the first one misses.

Piercer bodies are useful because, camel-like, they have means of storing food and water for weeks or months within their bodies. The chemicals which allow them to do this can be used to preserve human food, also. A nice idea, but I'm one of those DMs who always forgets about things like rations going off, so I'm not sure how useful it would be to my players.

Sleeper

03-15-2009 05:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10107368)

Another of the dungeon-ecology monsters, Piercers are the kind of being that couldn't survive without adventurers. Apparently they're a kind of gastropod whose shell is so hard and sharp that it can pierce armour.

An organic Sword of Damocles. What if piercers only spend a tiny fraction of their lifecycle as predators? Rock drippings. Stone from water. Sure. Stalactites make so much sense. Wouldn't it be simpler if they just crawled and bred there, in the dark and the wet? What if piercers grow anywhere that's suitable. Cave roofs aren't lined with teeth of stone. They're lined with piercers. Huge colonies or nests, by the thousands, millions, billions. Hibernating, waiting. For the rare chance when their activity cycle meets up with a wandering monster, and they feed and multiply again. This would be particularly nasty if there was a spell you could hang on someone. A contingent effect. "Don't do this". And if they do, well, what it does is it wakes piercers around you. Activates their feeding instinct. For your sin, no cave in the world will ever be safe again. Because the small rain of wedge-shaped molluscs down will rain.

I do love that they're molluscs. It implies a whole land-based web of assorted relatives, beyond the common snail. The cavern walls might be covered with luminescent barnacles. The sand underneath might hide a bed of oysters with razor-sharp shells. Tusk shells as stagmites. Sessile squids like great boulders, with arms that reach out... oh wait, is that the origin of the roper? Octopi spread across the surface of the roof like eight-armed starfish ready to drop, wrap their arms around their prey, and sink their beak into... oh, that's the executioner's hood, isn't it? Slimy little squirming shellless things, all muscle and foot. Maybe the purple worm is a great caudofoveata, feeding by burying itself in the ground with only its mouth exposed, slurping down passing detritus like incautious adventurers. From little shelled organisms tiny enough to be lost among the grains of sand, to colossal monsters.

rex monday

03-15-2009 06:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10107368)

Piercer

Piercer bodies are useful because, camel-like, they have means of storing food and water for weeks or months within their bodies. The chemicals which allow them to do this can be used to preserve human food, also. A nice idea, but I'm one of those DMs who always forgets about things like rations going off, so I'm not sure how useful it would be to my players.

Since they must be rich enough in nutrients to survive long periods stuck to the ceiling of a cave, I'd say they're probably a strong source of food. Basically, just say you can make 10 field rations worth of food from a decent-sized piercer. Or make them delicacies like oysters.

SrGrvsaLot

03-15-2009 07:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

If you think about it, a Phoenix can be good while still being a fairly effective villain. It is literally a creature with no concept of death. Saying to one "you have to stop or we're all going to die" or "if you do that, you'll cause the deaths of thousands" is simply not going to have the same emotional punch for a phoenix as it would for any normal creature. After all, the Phoenix itself must have died hundreds of times, and it never seemed the worse for wear.

So, to use a Phoenix as an adversary, you simply give it a good goal that cannot be accomplished without killing or, to heighten the ambiguity even more, a good goal that distracts it from curing a plague or otherwise causes it to ignore a situation where people are dying. In this situation, it'll be very hard to persuade the Phoenix to turn from its course without violence because, as far as the Phoenix is concerned, so what if people die. Their souls will be reborn in the afterlife and they'll enjoy an eternity of paradise. It's not really worth getting worked up about.

If you really want to twist the knife, you can make the Phoenix's goal really worthwhile. Perhaps a city is being attacked by rapidly multiplying undead. The Phoenix can stop the spread of the plague by immolating the city. This will free the undead from their unnatural torment and allow their souls to move on to their proper destination. Unfortunately, not everyone in the city is infected yet. The Phoenix will kill those people too.

If the PCs let the Phoenix burn the city, thousands of innocents will perish. If they stop the Phoenix, those same people stand a high chance of being eaten (and converted) by the undead and the zombie plague might well expand beyond its city of origin. How can the players protect the world, save the innocent, and put the undead to rest? And can they do it without having to fight a powerful and genuinely good creature?

Sleeper

03-15-2009 09:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

What if piercers are eggs?

Hard outer shell to protect, rich nutrients inside to cradle and feed. But what kind of creature needs to kill to be born?

The obvious answer is the mind flayer. Illithid aren't a true, independent race. They're a parasite, a symbiote. They require another creature to live, to breed. They are composites, hybrids. Things living within tissue and flesh that originally belonged to another.

They lace strategic ceilings with their eggs. Which grow a hard point at the bottom, along the axis where gravity pulls. They are semi-aware. Sentient, not sapient. But even a protosapient telepath can sense and feel. They choose their targets. Worms and fish pass by safely. As do the odd hounds of the underdark, and even the grimlocks.

What they wait for is the touch of a mind. A brain, an intelligence. Something they can bond with and grown into, creating the adult composite. Then they drop. The wound allows ingress. Their foot burrows in, connects. Sustains the vascular system at minimal levels, preventing decay. Deeper in, sliding past organs like escape artists, greased with the slime their body exudes. Finding the spinal column, blinding tracing it back to the brain. Eating it away, or parts of it. Leaving the higher functions. But the lower functions, the so-called lizard brain, becomes illithid.

Even intelligent, we are creatures of instinct. The mind is just a tool. It requires a driving force. And the mind flayer invader provides that motivation and instinct. The old memories remain, slightly decayed. The high functioning brain that reasons and thinks still exists. But... call it the soul, separate from the mind... is now something alien.

Using the nutrients in the yolk, the foot changes, splits, elongates. Becomes tentacles, that sprout from the base of the hind brain and merge with the bottom of the face.

By the time the horribly mutilated body rises from its near-death, or actual-death, stasis, the slime has coalesced like glue, and become a seal. The nether tail of the illithid has become attenuated, and buds and forms connections to the nervous and other systems abutting the wound. The body is not healed, but patched, by the providence of its new controlling force.

The sub-sapient illithid now has a brain, and the old brain and memories now have a new driving motivation. The newborn seeks out its own kind, with the beacon built into its brain. But it is also the perfect infiltrator. Possessing the knowledge and memories to fool even the lovers and family of its captured body. But also having the burgeoning power and control of others' lower-brain functions that allows them to mask themselves, to hide the horrible changes their transformation has wrought. To convince others that they are as they were.

And when they grow old, they return to their childish form. They produce more and more slime, that becomes like a resin, and begins to cake, to grow. Before their body stiffens, becomes immobile, they choose a place. Outside the colony, strategically located. Slime runs like melting wax down their body, and hardens like magma flows. They become a peak, a pillar. With only their eyes and their horribly altered mouths exposed. The tentacles grow, lengthen, strengthen, become able to lash out a dozen feet.

Most are slain in this form, protecting the new wave of younglings, but a rare few survive long after the colony packs up and leaves. They revert even further. The humanoid brain rots, decays. Their mind diminishes. All that is left of their once-mighty mentatics is concentrated in their touch, enfeebling their prey. Their mouths gape as their jaws are absorbed into the amber-like resin, which becomes like rock.

What we know as ropers were once unfortunate humanoids who fell prey to a falling piercer, were reborn with an wicked urge in their brain, betrayed all they once knew and loved, then were abandoned in their dotage by the young generation of their new family, and fell into senility balanced by a newly burgeoning physicality.

JRM

03-16-2009 04:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10107368)

Piercer

To begin with, I'll say I've got a fondness for the Monstrous Manual illustration of the Piercer. It's really rather goofy looking, a cartoon stalagmite with an eye glaring from the side but it just seems appropriate for a slightly silly monster like the Piercer, and there's something about the eye that leads me to imagine that Piercer thinking "one more step and I'm gonna git that sucka!"

The artist obviously did not pay close heed to the Monstrous Manual entry, since the picture doesn't have the eyestalks it described (the MM entry obviously draws a lot from *The Ecology of the Piercer* in Dragon #72).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10107368)

Another of the dungeon-ecology monsters, Piercers are the kind of being that couldn't survive without adventurers. Apparently they're a kind of gastropod whose shell is so hard and sharp that it can pierce armour.

Why couldn't they survive without adventurers? They're not like Goldbugs, Locklurkers and Mimics which specialize in preying on treasureseekers, a Piercer will attack anything that moves, and is quite happy eating other subterranean fauna.

Speaking of the shell, a conceptual problem I had with the Piercer is if it has a regular mollusc-type shell, why doesn't it break when it hits the cave floor, regardless of how far it falls? Similarly, how come it has a set damage by size which does not vary with the height of the ceiling it dropped from.

To resolve with minor problem, in my campaign Piercer shells are not calcinous, but are made up of a tough, flexible material resembling horn. Furthermore, they spin a silk safety line and glue it to the ceiling before they drop, which acts as a drag-cord so they never fall too fast and damage themselves on impact. It also means they don't crawl back up the walls like official Piercers, but reel themselves back up their safety line if they miss.

As an added bonus, a Piercer uses its safety line to evade predators - if a giant gecko or cave-beetle climbs across the ceiling to attack one, it can drop off and hang in midair to avoid it.

An idea I played about with an rejected was that Piercers actually hollow out or otherwise mould real stalagmites to incorporate into their shells. The hard, sharp tip of the piercer may be a piece of flint or limestone it has shaped into a weapon. If it chips the point, the Piercer throws it away and installs a new one. In the end I decided they could just shed and regrow their shell's tip to keep it sharp.

JRM

03-16-2009 04:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10107475)

*I do love that they're molluscs. It implies a whole land-based web of assorted relatives, beyond the common snail. The cavern walls might be covered with luminescent barnacles. The sand underneath might hide a bed of oysters with razor-sharp shells. Tusk shells as stagmites. Sessile squids like great boulders, with arms that reach out... oh wait, is that the origin of the roper? **Octopi spread across the surface of the roof like eight-armed starfish ready to drop, wrap their arms around their prey, and sink their beak into... oh, that's the executioner's hood, isn't it?** Slimy little squirming shellless things, all muscle and foot. Maybe the purple worm is a great caudofoveata, feeding by burying itself in the ground with only its mouth exposed, slurping down passing detritus like incautious adventurers. From little shelled organisms tiny enough to be lost among the grains of sand, to colossal monsters.*

Well it's not the executioner's hood, but 3rd edition does have **this little charmer**. Not that FRPG didn't have cave-cephalopods that predated the darkmantle.

I once wanted to have an AD&D underworld which was formed by the action of millions of subterranean molluscs, like limpets up to the size of a house, that would slowly grind out caves and passages. The adventurer's would follow a circular tunnel 15' across and find out it dead-ends with an enormous shell, or drops into an enormous cave with thousands of theses things on the walls, floor and ceiling. They'd have probably ended up being luminous as well, since it's a grand AD&D tradition to have some luminous fauna or

flora underground so the adventurers can see what they're doing.

Sleeper

03-16-2009 05:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10109064)

*Well it's not the executioner's hood, but 3rd edition does have **this little charmer**.*

Minor rework of the same monster.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10109038)

*(the MM entry obviously draws a lot from **The Ecology of the Piercer** in Dragon #72).*

The very first ecology article, in fact. The piercer started the whole trend that culminated in the *Monstrous Manual*. I like the idea of limpets and a safety line. But I also like the idea that piercing is a do-or-die endeavor: If they miss, they go splat. They have one chance. This obviously doesn't work well as a regular feeding mechanism (no predator with that great a chance of dying every time it eats will survive), but if they're an egg and metamorphose after feeding, or if they only eat once in their lifecycle and spawn afterwards, it could be a viable tactic.

JRM

03-16-2009 10:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10109273)

Minor rework of the same monster.

I always thought of the Executioners Hood as being another of AD&D's goofy clothing monsters, like the Cloaker, so I don't see much similarity with the Darkmantle. Not enough tentacles, for a start.:)

Wasn't the Darkmantle supposed to be 3E's 'replacement' for the Piercer as a low-level threat. I remember reading something about them wanting to design a more versatile stalagmite-imitating cave predator.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10109273)

The very first ecology article, in fact. The piercer started the whole trend that culminated in the Monstrous Manual. I like the idea of limpets and a safety line. But I also like the idea that piercing is a do-or-die endeavor: If they miss, they go splat. They have one chance. This obviously doesn't work well as a regular feeding mechanism (no predator

with that great a chance of dying every time it eats will survive), but if they're an egg and metamorphosize after feeding, or if they only eat once in their lifecycle and spawn afterwards, it could be a viable tactic.

Yes, the Piercers could actually get most of their food from cave algae, and just need the meat to grow eggs. They'd probably need more than a clutch of 6-8 like it says in the ecology article though, if they're only doing it once. The AD&D underworld is a pretty dangerous place, so I'd suspect their infant mortality must be dreadful, especially as the young don't even have shells to protect them.

Speaking about the Piercer going 'splat' if it misses, that ecology article says "If the piercer misses, it is usually smeared across the cavern floor.", while 2E obviously says nothing about them injuring themselves if they miss. Now which way did the 1E MM (pre-ecology) version go? I think it said something about them surviving but being helpless, which implies they climb back up to the ceiling, but my memory is fuzzy about the details.

Thane of Fife

03-16-2009 11:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Piercers seem like the perfect monster for an intelligent subterranean species to cultivate - not only can they serve as guardians, but there's also a good chance that they can produce pearls. Piercers could be the basis of the entire subterranean economy.

Sleeper

03-16-2009 01:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10110167)

Speaking about the Piercer going 'splat' if it misses, that ecology article says "If the piercer misses, it is usually smeared across the cavern floor.", while 2E obviously says nothing about them injuring themselves if they miss. Now which way did the 1E MM (pre-ecology) version go? I think it said something about them surviving but being helpless, which implies they climb back up to the ceiling, but my memory is fuzzy about the details.

Nope. No mention at all. One sentence on where they live, one sentence about their appearance, one sentence about dropping and killing, and three sentences about size (the big 4 HD variety "is about 6' long, 1' base diameter, and weights [sic] 500 pounds").

sim_james

03-16-2009 02:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Oooh, piercer pearls. They'd be like the blood diamonds of D&D campaign worlds!

noisms

03-16-2009 11:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10110907)

Oooh, piercer pearls. They'd be like the blood diamonds of D&D campaign worlds!

You could even have piercer farms, where thousands of the things are bred and their pearls harvested by particularly enterprising derro.

noisms

03-17-2009 04:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Plant, Dangerous

Dangerous Plant. Seems self-explanatory. Let's examine each in turn.

Choke Creeper

This is like a huge clump of ivy, up to 160' long and with as many as 64 branch vines, which grab victims and constrict to cause damage (with a chance of strangulation and instant death).

Mantrap

A venus flytrap, except for men (and presumably women). It attracts humanoid beings with a special pollen and then swallows them; there is no hope of escape unless there is help from the outside.

Retch Plant

This is a kind of palm tree whose fruits, when they fall, splash vomit-inducing fluid everywhere.

Snapper-Saw

Like something out of a slasher flick, this plant traps humanoids and then slices them with 'saw-stalks' and feeds on the sprayed blood.

Thornslinger

These are low-growing bushes which fling thorns - but only as a defensive measure.

Tri-Flower Frond

As the name suggests, this plant has three flowers - an orange one which makes people comatose, a yellow one which sprays them with enzymes to dissolve them, and a red one to eat the resultant fluid.

Yellow Musk Creeper

Rather like the mold of the same hue, this plant infects victims with a seedling which works its way into their brain and turns them into a zombie. After two months the zombie dies and a new Creeper grows out of the corpse.

JRM

03-17-2009 07:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10110679)

Nope. No mention at all. One sentence on where they live, one sentence about their appearance, one sentence about dropping and killing, and three sentences about size (the big 4 HD variety "is about 6' long, 1' base diameter, and weights [sic] 500 pounds").

Ta, that's more or less what I remembered, but I was too lazy to pull out my copies of the 1E MM.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10112247)

You could even have piercer farms, where thousands of the things are bred and their pearls harvested by particularly enterprising derro.

Yes, and the derro would feed them by driving slaves and livestock into the farm-caves (who may be the same thing to those CE midgets) while they crowd around a balcony, chortling at the gory sight.

To increase the supply of Piercer-Pearls, they could put pieces of grit on the backs of baby Piercers just as they start to grow their shells.

That just leaves harvesting. An obvious approach would be some kind of little roof on wheels that moves about the cave, which the Derro can shelter under. The roof may even be designed to catch piercers that fall upon it, so they get stuck *in* the roof and can just be wheeled out and killed.

DMH

03-17-2009 07:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I love dangerous plants. Even more than the cube, they can be placed in plain sight and still nab a character or two. What I don't like are the stupidly dangerous ones like the blood drainer from 1e that inflicted 1/4th the victims hip points per round or the choke creeper.

Dangerous plants should be more common with all the magical megaherbivores about.

JRM

03-17-2009 07:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10116227)

Plant, Dangerous

Dangerous Plant. Seems self-explanatory. Let's examine each in turn.

Some of these plants first saw print in Expedition to the Barrier Peaks - i.e. Tri-Flower Frond, the Retch Plant, the Thorny. So remember lads & lasses, these are Dangerous Plants *From Space*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10116227)

Mantrap

A venus flytrap, except for men (and presumably women). It attracts humanoid beings with a special pollen and then swallows them; there is no hope of escape unless there is help from the outside.

Unless there's a variety whose scent only attracts males. Some kind of overpowering magical pheromone. There are real-life animals which fake sex-pheromones to lure prey. Which adds the image of a PC being eaten by a plant will they're trying to have conjugal relations with it, plus the possibility that they could use them as pollinators when they're not hungry / during their breeding season.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10116227)

Retch Plant

This is a kind of palm tree whose fruits, when they fall, splash vomit-inducing fluid everywhere.

This is one of those curious 'barely a monster' creatures like Green Slime. Its practically inanimate, all it can do is drop nauseating fruit when disturbed. That said, its stat entry does have a few amusing features like "Diet: Sun, soil" and "Morale: Average (8-10)". How many times, if ever, would a Retch Plant's morale enter play? It wouldn't change its behaviour, indeed it probably can't change its behaviour, being incapable of fleeing or surrendering - or doing much else apart from dropping loose fruit. Most PCs would never even realize it was demoralized, barring *Speak with Plants*.

The flavour-text mentioning mantrap nectar is an ingredient in *Philter of Love* may support this possibility.

rex monday

03-17-2009 07:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10116648)

Unless there's a variety whose scent only attracts males. Some kind of overpowering magical pheromone. There are real-life animals which fake sex-pheromones to lure prey. Which adds the image of a PC being eaten by a plant will they're trying to have conjugal relations with it, plus the possibility that they could use them as pollinators when they're not hungry / during their breeding season.

You mean Dryads?

I always liked the fact the Assassin Vine in the 3e MM had grapes. It always conjured images of the exotic and slightly narcotic and toxic Assassin's Wine.

Hellzon

03-17-2009 07:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10116227)

Plant, Dangerous

Note to self - convert that stuff to 4E.

Sleeper

03-17-2009 08:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The retch plant was originally paired with the banderlog.

Yes. The giant carnivorous baboon threw puke-melons instead of feces.

I think it's a shame they dropped two of my favorite alliterative plant-monsters: Vampire vines and grab grass. Wasn't until 3E that they really started to poach the Mystaran beasties (like the non-plant nightshades).

noisms

03-17-2009 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10116648)

"Diet: Sun, soil"

"Diet: Sun, water", shorely?

JRM

03-18-2009 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by rex monday (Post 10116696)
You mean Dryads?

I always liked the fact the Assassin Vine in the 3e MM had grapes. It always conjured images of the exotic and slightly narcotic and toxic Assassin's Wine.

I think I already mentioned that idea back when we where dealing with the Ds. At least AD&D Dryads aren't maneaters.

Although that gives me an idea....:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10116780)
"Diet: Sun, water", shorely?

I've been keeping up by reading the dotd.com version of the Monstrous Manual rather than pulling out my hardcopy of it, is there an error in the transcription?

Although if we wanted to be accurate, "Diet: Sun, soil, water and atmospheric gases" would likely be truer.

Mr. Teapot

03-18-2009 03:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 10116722)
Note to self - convert that stuff to 4E.

[There's already a couple dangerous plants in 4e.](#) Not these ones specifically, but it's a start. and the model of making plants into Hazards/Traps is a good one: they're closer to natural traps than they are to monsters.

You could perhaps imagine some big set-piece plant monster as a Skill Challenge. Something like a Tendriculous or the Sarlacc Pit: you have to escape its clutches, but it's not exactly running around attacking you so much as trying to trick you (so Perception and Nature checks) then grabbing you with its vines (Athletics and Acrobatics to avoid/escape, plus more Nature to know how to escape/defeat it).

demiurge1138

03-18-2009 03:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

No wonder the tri-flower frond is so weird! It's from space! That makes sense!

noisms

03-18-2009 12:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10117700)

I've been keeping up by reading the dotd.com version of the Monstrous Manual rather than pulling out my hardcopy of it, is there an error in the transcription?

Although if we wanted to be accurate, "Diet: Sun, soil, water and atmospheric gases" would likely be truer.

No, it's "sun, soil" - I was trying to make the same point you are here. ;)

noisms

03-18-2009 01:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Plant, Intelligent

Another mammoth entry, and we've got the Puddings coming up soon, too. Fortunately there are a couple of good monsters in amongst the following entries.

Throughout the MM there seems to be a weird conflict going on between actual real-world biology and pure fantasy. The Intelligent Plant entry is one of the points where this bubbles to the surface: "Some are the unnatural results of arcane influences, while others may have evolved naturally." This is part of the book's charm, though I feel the idea of how natural selection would operate in a world where magic exists is one of the great unmined areas of the fantasy genre. Somebody who knows more about real world zoology and biology than me should have a go at experimenting with the idea.

Anyway, lots of Intelligent Plants to get through, so without further ado:

Hangman Tree

These plants can move (2' per hour), and constantly patrol around the forest, looking for humanoids to eat. They release a hallucinagenic perfume which makes people think they are normal trees or treants ("depending on the mood of the tree"), and grab their victims with strangling vines before depositing them in their pitcher-plant style stomach.

Kelpie

A "mass of animated seaweed" which can form itself into the shape of a woman or horse and even venture out onto land. It then searches for human males, casts a *charm* spell on one, and tempts him into the sea to drown. It then eats the body. "They are said to have been created by the sea god to punish sailors", although who knows for what? Trespassing?

Obliviax

The famous "memory moss", with a diet of "soil, water, memories". To restore blanked memories the moss can be eaten, rather like how a scorpion contains the antidote to its poison, I suppose. The spores can also be used as a cure for senility or forgetfulness, which is a quest idea if ever there was one.

Quickwood

An unusual one, this - a large oak with a face ("90% unlikely to be noticed") - which extends roots to capture prey and drag them towards the mouth. It can control surrounding oak trees, using them to gather information, and is sometimes used as a guardian for treasure etc.

Shambling Mound

A heap of rotting vegetation with a vaguely humanoid shape and a controlling 'brain' hidden in the middle. Electric attacks give them power, and there are rumours of giant Shambling Mounds deep in swamps and jungles, who have been feeding off the attacks of Will O' Wisps. I suppose there is no upper limit to their size...

Strangleweed

A pile of intelligent kelp which attacks creatures passing nearby. Rather boring, this one.

Giant Sundew

Essentially a large version of the real world carnivorous plant, this gradually pulls itself along the ground and attempts to catch victims with its sticky tendrils.

Thorny

A "dog-like plant creature" which is used by Mold Men as a guard. They attack by biting victims and then rolling their spiky bodies against them. If you can get hold of the bud of a Thorny before it starts to grow, it's possible to train - this sounds like something an enterprising non-Mold Man could use. Imagine a huge orchard of Thorny trees in the grounds of some Duke's castle, ready to create an entire army of the things.

demiurge1138

03-18-2009 04:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Shambling mounds are awesome. Combining them with will-o-wisps is just gravy. In 3.x, shocker lizards (aka reptilian Pikachus) are also a popular combination.

khyron1144

03-18-2009 05:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035742)

Did anybody ever actually picture the various humanoids in such garish colors?

I've always figured that for the most part the goblinoid races, which to me includes Orcs, come mainly in different greens. It's probably something that I unconsciously lifted from Warhammer. Whatever it's origins, this idea helped me come up with something: the mostly Half-orc district in my world's major civilized human country's capital city is called Greenie-town.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)

Plant, Intelligent

This is part of the book's charm, though I feel the idea of how natural selection would operate in a world where magic exists is one of the great unmined areas of the fantasy genre. Somebody who knows more about real world zoology and biology than me should have a go at experimenting with the idea.

Back when I was in high school biology, I was kicking around ideas regarding D&D taxonomy in my head. Trying to go through the Monstrous Manual and commit some of it to paper, I only got as far as Aboleths before I had to start making up new terminology from either Class or Order on down.

I pretty much gave up on it there.

Kingdom
Phylum
Class
Order
Family
Genus
Species

I remember it from the mnemonic that I learned all the way back in seventh-grade science. Kings Play Cards On Fat Green Stools. Hooray for knowledge that has no application once you get out of high school!

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10116648)

This is one of those curious 'barely a monster' creatures like Green Slime. Its practically inanimate, all it can do is drop nauseating fruit when disturbed.

It is worth mentioning that Banderlog are supposed to sometimes live near Retch Plant groves and throw Retch Plant fruit instead of rocks. Doesn't do much to help the Retch Plant, though does it?

JRM

03-18-2009 06:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)

Plant, Intelligent

Another mammoth entry, and we've got the Puddings coming up soon, too. Fortunately there are a couple of good monsters in amongst the following entries.

Throughout the MM there seems to be a weird conflict going on between actual real-world biology and pure fantasy. The Intelligent Plant entry is one of the points where this bubbles to the surface: "Some are the unnatural results of arcane influences, while others may have evolved naturally." This is part of the book's charm, though I feel the idea of how natural selection would operate in a world where magic exists is one of the great unmined areas of the fantasy genre. Somebody who knows more about real world zoology and biology than me should have a go at experimenting with the idea.

That sounds like a good idea for a thread! I've had a few ideas on the issue, such as magic allows for a world where Lamarkian evolution works, and it means that statistically highly unlikely events are far more likely to occur (those "one in a million" crossbreeds may happen about one in a hundred, or one in ten. Plus, of course, magic is a powerful mutagen.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)
Kelpie

**snip* "They are said to have been created by the sea god to punish sailors", although who knows for what? Trespassing?*

That sailor should never have put the moves on the Sea God's girl, now everyone suffers for it.:o

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)
Strangleweed

Giant Sundew

I'm a bit uncertain whether these should be in the "Plant, Intelligent" category. Sure, they're geniuses compared to an average daffodil, but they've only beast-level intelligence. A Strangleweed or Giant Sundew doesn't have any behaviour that's more sophisticated than a Mantrap or Yellow Musk Creeper. I can't help suspecting it's because they didn't have room to fit them in with the "Plants, Dangerous".

JRM

03-18-2009 07:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)
Thorny

A "dog-like plant creature" which is used by Mold Men as a guard. They attack by biting victims and then rolling their spiky bodies against them. If you can get hold of the bud of a Thorny before it starts to grow, it's possible to train - this sounds like something an enterprising non-Mold Man could use. Imagine a huge orchard of Thorny trees in the grounds of some Duke's castle, ready to create an entire army of the things.

I wonder whether this includes "training" in a **topiary** sense. Imagine a hedge-maze defended by elephants, men, dragons and lions all formed from living, moving vegetation. They're all just thornies who have been pruned and shaped in different forms as they grew.

Of course, topiary monsters are old news in RPGs, I've got published modules with such beasts from the early 80s.

Sleeper

03-18-2009 08:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by khyron1144 (Post 10120954)

I've always figured that for the most part the goblinoid races, which to me includes Orcs, come mainly in different greens. It's probably something that I unconsciously lifted from Warhammer. Whatever it's origins, this idea helped me come up with something: the mostly Half-orc district in my world's major civilized human country's capital city is called Greenie-town.

I think I was more puzzled by it than anything at the time, but looking back at the illustration of the hobgoblin in the original MM (and to a lesser degree, the goblin), the art has a very clear Japanese influence. From the crest on the helm, to the puffed out and tied off sleeves with some kind of paisley-like pattern, to the shape of the armor. Eyes curved like that and cheeks almost like cut panes of glass wouldn't pass muster these days, but it's clear what the artist was going for. Toss in the oni-like coloration ("dark reddish-brown to gray black. Their faces bright red-orange to red. Large males will have blue-red noses.") and they seem more akin to the ogre magi than the other more western-influenced humanoids.

Hellzon

03-18-2009 08:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)

Hangman Tree

These plants can move (2' per hour), and constantly patrol around the forest, looking for humanoids to eat. They release a hallucinagenic perfume which makes people think they are normal trees or treants ("depending on the mood of the tree"), and grab their victims with strangling vines before depositing them in their pitcher-plant style stomach.

[Old Man Willow](#) from LOTR?

DMH

03-18-2009 08:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)

This is part of the book's charm, though I feel the idea of how natural selection would operate in a world where magic exists is one of the great unmined areas of the fantasy genre. Somebody who knows more about real world zoology and biology than me should have a go at experimenting with the idea.

Actually I have, at least for Mutant Future (where mutagens are magical). I will PM you when it goes on sale.

As for the intelligent plants, I wonder where thornies come from. Are they wild or something the mold creates from dogs or similar animals?

Sleeper

03-18-2009 09:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10121414)

As for the intelligent plants, I wonder where thornies come from. Are they wild or something the mold creates from dogs or similar animals?

The text says they reproduce by seeds that bud and sprout, but I rather like the idea of a parasite.

A dog dies alone in the woods. The corpse is quickly infested with a mold. The flesh decays, and falls off or is consumed. The mold grows, until it penetrates the bones, where the rich marrow forms a fertile conduit. Once thoroughly covered inside and out with the organism, the bones begin to twitch, as if they were flesh and there was some kind of escaping gas. Then they click and clatter, and the whole mound shivers. The corpse, coated with must and dark stains and strange growths around the joints that replace tendons, stands, and then starts rushing madly and tirelessly through the forest. They sense by heat, not sight or smell. They seek warm things, casting themselves foolishly into fires, but more often finding a bear, or merchant caravan. They can't articulate it, but what they're really seeking is a new place for the parasitic fungus to grow in. Warm, rotting flesh. And a skeletal structure to animate, so they can spread once again. As they run, the mold grows vigorously in a last spurt, finishing the remaining consumable organic material on the corpse. Questing tendrils start to splinter and split the bone, and weird growths or fungoid protrusions stab out, wounding and infecting any animal they are forced into. The dead dog's mouth doesn't bite; the slain lynx's claws don't catch. They just flail and shiver their body and slam into anything warm. This final spurt of growth starts to harm the structural integrity of the bone, and the body starts to collapse, running on splintered legs until finally it falls into a shivering mass. That's why they're in such a rush to kill. They need to slay something so they will have a fertile new place to grow, and start the lifecycle again.

DMH

03-18-2009 09:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121452)

The text says they reproduce by seeds that bud and sprout, but I rather like the idea of a parasite.

Interesting description, but I meant originally. Where they created on purpose (by the creator of vegpeygmyies) or something they adopted?

Sleeper

03-18-2009 10:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10121557)

Interesting description, but I meant originally. Where they created on purpose (by the creator of vegpeygmyies) or something they adopted?

I think "wizards did it" is D&D's answer to evolution.

Worms with rotating circular-saw mouths big enough to swallow the largest of menhirs? Wizards did it.

A giant owl head grafted on a bear? Wizards did it.

Angry topiary? Of course wizards did it.

Nothing happens naturally. The gods just started things off. Everything since is on some mad wizard's head.

DMH

03-18-2009 10:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Okay, but which wizards? Some human or elf in the dawn of time (or 50 years ago) or vegpeygmy wizards* that wanted a pet/guard animal for their people.

*Yes, I know technically they can't, but 2e is much easier to break in that regard.

Sleeper

03-18-2009 10:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Obviously the vegpeygmyies got a hoary old treant drunk on fermented maple syrup, and when he passed-out in his own filth (what exactly do trees puke up, after all?) they sold his body off to a wizard's guild* in exchange for a certain... consideration. They wanted a cuddly-wuddly pet to love and care for and fuss over and dress up in knitted (from vines) sweaters. (To vegpeygmyies, thorns just tickle.)

* Treant-trafficking. Oh the inhumanity!

JRM

03-18-2009 11:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121452)

The text says they reproduce by seeds that bud and sprout, but I rather like the idea of a parasite.

*A dog dies alone in the woods. The corpse is quickly infested with a mold. The flesh decays, and falls off or is consumed. The mold grows, until it penetrates the bones, where the rich marrow forms a fertile conduit. Once thoroughly covered inside and out with the organism, the bones begin to twitch, as if they were flesh and there was some kind of escaping gas. Then they click and clatter, and the whole mound shivers. The corpse, coated with must and dark stains and strange growths around the joints that replace tendons, stands, and then starts rushing madly and tirelessly through the forest. ***SNIP!*** This final spurt of growth starts to harm the structural integrity of the bone, and the body starts to collapse, running on splintered legs until finally it falls into a shivering mass. That's why they're in such a rush to kill. They need to slay something so they will have a fertile new place to grow, and start the lifecycle again.*

Well we've recently mentioned quite a few parasitic fungal/vegetable lifeforms that animate corpses (e.g. Moldies, Yellow Musk Zombies) so I quite like the idea of thornies from seeds.

That implies that the thorny itself is actually a fruit of the adult tree, designed for the dispersal of its kind. Maybe, like dogs, they bury food except that instead of digging up the bones later to eat, they lay a seed where they've buried a victim.

noisms

03-18-2009 11:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10121414)

Actually I have, at least for Mutant Future (where mutagens are magical). I will PM you when it goes on sale.

Thanks!

Sleeper

03-18-2009 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10121810)

Well we've recently mentioned quite a few parasitic fungal/vegetable lifeforms that animate corpses (e.g. Moldies, Yellow Musk Zombies) so I quite like the idea of thornies from seeds.

That implies that the thorny itself is actually a fruit of the adult tree, designed for the dispersal of its kind. Maybe, like dogs, they bury food except that instead of digging up the bones later to eat, they lay a seed where they've buried a victim.

That's okay, you don't have to play. I avoided the yellow musk creepers, myself.

But why oh why are the thornies shaped like animals? Convergent evolution needs a reason. Wasmannian Mimickry? Or is it a deliberate attempt to adopt the seeming of nearby humanoid kingdoms? (They might capture human pets and drug them until they're comatose so the pre-mobile thornies can grow over them like a lattice, and take on their shape.)

JRM

03-19-2009 02:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121927)

That's okay, you don't have to play. I avoided the yellow musk creepers, myself.

But why oh why are the thornies shaped like animals? Convergent evolution needs a reason. Wasmannian Mimickry. Or is it a deliberate attempt to adopt the seeming of nearby humanoid kingdoms? (They might capture human pets and drug them until they're comatose so the pre-mobile thornies can grow over them like a lattice, and take on their shape.)

It's not Wasmannian mimicry, thornies don't join packs of regular dogs and exploit them, indeed if I remember their Barrier Peaks illustration correctly they only resemble dogs in the vaguest of fashions - both are fully-erect quadruped with a head at one end equipped with jaws, but despite a similarity in general shape no one would mistake one for the other except under the poorest of conditions.

More likely, they're shaped like animals because they live like animals, so have analogues of the limbs and organs that hunting dogs need - their legs may have wooden bones and hydraulic vegetable muscles but they are used to chase prey like a dog so they are shaped like a dog's. Their jaws may be modified petals lined with thorn teeth and their stomach a hollow filled with digestive rootlets, but they fulfill the same carnivorous function as the corresponding parts of a dog.

That said, I would like there to be more obvious differences to a mammal apart from them being covered in thorns to tear up their prey. Maybe their sense-organs (eye- and ear- equivalents) look like flowers and sprout semi-randomly from their head and shoulders, and they smell via specialized digestive rootlets they stick out of their mouths.

JRM

03-19-2009 02:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121927)

That's okay, you don't have to play. I avoided the yellow musk creepers, myself.

Speaking of Yellow Musk Creepers (YMC), I've used them twice (because they happened to be in modules I was running and couldn't be bothered to change them) and found them a little unsatisfactory as a monster.

The basic problem is they're either no real danger- if the PCs recognize them as a threat they can easily destroy the flowers & zombies from a safe distance and then dig up the root) - or too much of a threat - If they walk into a patch unawares most of the party could easily all have flowers growing from their ears within a few rounds, and it takes powerful magic (*heal* and possibly *neutralize poison*) to cure the affliction, which most of my games were too low-level to possess.

I'd probably prefer a YMC that is sapient, and is able to charm humanoids to be its gardener-guards. Maybe it has to 'operate' on them for a turn or three to insert its control-tendrils into their minds, and it tries to get its slaves to lure more victims into its clutches (Now I'm imagining a smiling goblin walking up to the PCs and asking them to smell a "pretty flower").

Or have a YMC that's a more active combatant. Instead of rendering victims helpless with a puff of pollen it has mobile vines which lash, constrict and strangle them to death, then it creates zombie slaves from the corpses, and it doesn't only animate man-sized humanoids. To deal with a patch of such stuff the party may have to fight a small army of decaying goblins, wolves, deer and a badger.

Mr. Teapot

03-19-2009 03:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121927)

But why oh why are the thornies shaped like animals?

When the Thorny plant processes nutrients from the soil, it also absorbs DNA/the magical essence/whatever from the creatures buried in the ground there. So if a dog dies near a sprouting Thorny bush, the adult, mobile Thorny that grows from that bush will take one aspects of the dead dog: it will move on all fours, and adopt doglike behaviors and such. If a bear died there, you might get a big hulking thorn monster: maybe a Shambling Mound. The more fresh the corpse is when the Thorny bush grows there, the stronger the adult thorny's resemblance to the deceased creature, so things dead a long time only leave faint traces in appearance or behavior.

The truth is, Thornies and Vegepygmies are the same species of plant. Just the "Thorny" was grew on a spot where only animals had died, whereas the Vegepygmies grew on a graveyard or battlefield or elsewhere where they could absorb humanoid traits.

It might even be possible that Vegepygmies absorb some of the memories or personality of the dead humanoids they sprout from. Because that has all sorts of plot potential (as Alan Moore showed when writing "Swamp Thing"). Hunting down a vegepygmy tribe to see if any retain knowledge possessed by an explorer who died mapping their forest, say. Or a sad widow(er) who bands together with a tribe of vegepygmies because one grew on the grave of the deceased spouse. Or where did they PCs dump the body of the last villain they defeated? If it was in a forest somewhere, they might be hunted down by a Vegepygmy who thinks he is the original villain reborn. Maybe a village (of elves?) plants vegepygmy/thorny seeds on graves so that the

deceased can be reborn into a second life as a plant-man in the forest... do the vegepygmies then have a good relationship with said elf village, or do they find it hard to deal with the still living?

The Last Conformist

03-19-2009 06:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10120443)
Kelpie

A "mass of animated seaweed" which can form itself into the shape of a woman or horse and even venture out onto land. It then searches for human males, casts a charm spell on one, and tempts him into the sea to drown. It then eats the body. "They are said to have been created by the sea god to punish sailors", although who knows for what? Trespassing?

With the number of supernatural nasties out to seduce and kill male sailors, one'd think there'd be a business opportunity in D&D land for an all-female shipping company.

Mr. Teapot

03-19-2009 07:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10123866)
With the number of supernatural nasties out to seduce and kill male sailors, one'd think there'd be a business opportunity in D&D land for an all-female shipping company.

Hello, new campaign pitch.

Obviously, the number of sea creatures eating male sailors comes from the fact that sailors were traditionally male (barring a few exceptions, including a surprising number of crossdressing women). And even more so, they were men who were away from women for months at a time. So the stories they told each other involved seductive creatures. And D&D stole all those weird sea legends and stuck them in this book here.

Sleeper

03-19-2009 07:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10122962)

When the Thorny plant processes nutrients from the soil, it also absorbs DNA/the magical essence/whatever from the creatures buried in the ground there. So if a dog dies near a sprouting Thorny bush, the adult, mobile Thorny that grows from that bush will take one aspects of the dead dog: it will move on all fours, and adopt doglike behaviors and such. If a bear died there, you might get a big hulking thorn monster: maybe a Shambling Mound. The more fresh the corpse is when the Thorny bush grows there, the stronger the adult thorny's resemblance to the deceased creature, so things dead a long time only leave faint traces in appearance or behavior.

The truth is, Thornies and Vegepygmies are the same species of plant. Just the "Thorny" was grew on a spot where only animals had died, whereas the Vegepygmies grew on a graveyard or battlefield or elsewhere where they could absorb humanoid traits.

It might even be possible that Vegepygmies absorb some of the memories or personality of the dead humanoids they sprout from. Because that has all sorts of plot potential (as Alan Moore showed when writing "Swamp Thing"). Hunting down a vegepygmy tribe to see if any retain knowledge possessed by an explorer who died mapping their forest, say. Or a sad widow(er) who bands together with a tribe of vegepygmies because one grew on the grave of the deceased spouse. Or where did they PCs dump the body of the last villain they defeated? If it was in a forest somewhere, they might be hunted down by a Vegepygmy who thinks he is the original villain reborn. Maybe a village (of elves?) plants vegepygmy/thorny seeds on graves so that the deceased can be reborn into a second life as a plant-man in the forest... do the vegepygmies then have a good relationship with said elf village, or do they find it hard to deal with the still living?

Good answer :).

"Now that you're done killing off that mean tarrasque, do you mind if I plant a few rose bushes on the mound? It's good luck, young sirs and ma'ams," says the innocent peasant trundling up the side of the barrow on a wagon.

Maybe the barrows that litter the kingdom are all the resting place of a supposedly singular tarrasque. Enchanted with spells that cause perpetual harm to keep them down, and sealed away behind powerful barriers so no casual adventurers stumble in. But why are there so many of them? We dug up the resting place of the first one after we killed the second, but it's still sleeping there. If you can call "continually being hacked to pieces by a platoon of iron golems" sleeping. Because a tarrasque is a plant, you see. A waving mass of mad shrubbery. And a new one always seems to sprout and grow from the resting place of the former one.

Monsieur Meuble

03-19-2009 08:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

One could have doubts about how the ever present sages of the University of Teratology did manage to learn so much about the obliviax. After all, it seems difficult to even describe it, to begin with ! "La la la ! I'm a teratologist harmlessly trying to discover new kind of beasties and... ho my head... lol wut ? What I am doing here, 59 feet away from this normal looking tree covered in moss ? Better find someone to tell me where I am..."

Well,, they were discovered and studied by the Secret Police of the Local Lawful Evil Dictatorship (LLED), after a disgraced official was sent to administer a shithole on the savage border of the LLED to never be heard notably again. After the capitol realized said shithole didn't sent collected taxes for a few months, suspecting the beginning of an insurrection, a couple of wizards of the Secret Police where sent with instruction of discretion and keeping mind protections spell on use constantly, so to keep being alert and not be influenced by propaganda from the enemy. Arriving at the shithole, they quickly discovered that the taxes were in fact collected everyday and stocked at the isolated manor of the governor, perched on a cliff. Once said manor infiltrated, they discovered that the taxes were stocked by the governor himself and a bunch of soldiers in secluded caves under the manor. Long story short : said caves belong to a network of subterranean structures where the obliviax originated and the first day of tax collection, the governor ans his goons went down there with the money, deposited it, and then forgot that today was the first day of tax collection and so did the same the next day. For months. As, to them, the completion of tax collection never

came, they didn't send it to the capital. The cause of the memory loss was identified by the iron-minded wizards and, well they did a report to the Inquisition, who was very interested...

Nowaday, the Oblivix is mass produced by the Secret Police. It was first used to finish the interrogation of arrested resistant and political opponents : once every interesting informations were extirpated, a couple of healing to cover most torture marks, an aspersion of wine and a quarter of hour in a locked room with a golem holding a patch of oblivix was all that was necessary for the interrogated victim to forgot he was arrested and just betrayed his comrade from his cell of the Resistance, and to be sent in the street believing he spent the night drinking himself oblivious. Then, as the oblivix was so useful, it was extremely researched on by the biologist mages working for the LLED in highly controlled conditions, and with as much tests on human guinea pigs as the political prisons could deliver. That's how the medical and alchemical properties of the oblivix where discovered...

So, now, the Secret Police doesn't ever bother with torture and interrogation (except for entertainment purpose, of course...), they just lock the suspect with the golem with oblivix, send him out and a political officer eat the moss and know everything he needs to know. So, they are now extremely efficient and terrible in their hunt for opponent, and the only surviving opposition networks are the ones so paranoid and enshrouded in secrets, mysteries and protocols to protect anonymity they don't have time for serious opposition...

The oblivix is cultivated in two places : first, in an underground room in the bowels of the Secret Police Fortress in the capital of the LLED. The room has only one access, leading the "interrogation" room. It is strictly controled so that no agent get too close of the patches of moss. They are cultivated by golems of two sorts : one team of golem is doing the cultivation itself, tending the patches, humidifying the air and bringing a patch in the interrogation room when needed. The other team is interpreting a comical routine (the same everyday) for a public of chained prisoners, so as to give them something worth remembering, itself worth eating for the oblivix.

The second place of culture are the underground of the manor of the shithole where it was first discovered. The manor has been converted in some kind of mad science laboratory where all ind of evil experiment are done on human guinea pigs with oblivix and derivatives of all sort. Also, studies are done about the origin of the moss : its spores infiltrated the cave by fissures connected to a network of caves, but most of said network seems to be divination proof and so probably involve an artificial strcuture put there by a forgotten civilization that so wanted the place to be forgotten they bioengineered the oblivix to back-up the "there's nothing here" magical effect. So, of course what is hidden there must be cracked open and given to the sinister hands of the LLED. Son it's not a bad thing that no wizard of the secret police is allowed to go down there, for fear of him losing his knowledge and allowing to to be retrieved in a random moss, and no wizard NOT belonging to the secret police is allowed down there because, duh, secret of the State !

So, effectively, the mining is left to a bunch of golems with the problem of supervising the digging : the golems can't explain what they precisely did and saw, no one can can down there and come back to tell what they saw because they somehow forgot it while coming back, and divinations are crypted, so no remote control...

So, it can take some time before the LLED put sits hand on the nuclear arsenal of the Ancients, but it will happen, eventually...

noisms

03-19-2009 07:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10124331)

Once said manor infiltrated, they discovered that the taxes were stocked by the governor himself and a bunch of soldiers in secluded caves under the manor. Long story short : said caves belong to a network of subterranean structures where the oblivix originated and the first day of tax collection, the governor ans his goons went down there with the money, deposited it, and then forgot that today was the first day of tax collection and so did the same the next day. For months.

I'm trying to think of a way to force a group of players into an eternal loop, a la the Star Trek: TNG

episode *Cause and Effect*, using an oblixi, but how it would all hang together remains frustratingly out of reach.

DMH

03-19-2009 07:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10121927)

But why oh why are the thornies shaped like animals? Convergent evolution needs a reason.

How fast could a shrub run if it had muscles in its roots? The dog shape is simply more efficient.

What I was thinking of last night was having them human corpses/skeletons wrapped up in vines. The lower leg bones are discarded so the limbs are more equal in size. Could be useful for an evil druid trying to depopulate an area or a standard druid trying to control goblin or orc numbers.

Monsieur Meuble

03-20-2009 06:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10126224)

I'm trying to think of a way to force a group of players into an eternal loop, a la the Star Trek: TNG episode Cause an Effect, using an oblixi, but how it would all hang together remains frustratingly out of reach.

"You wake up at the Inn in the Village near the Dungeon. Yesterday, you were hired by the local noble to kill the lich trying to settle down there. You did all the shopping to have your full gear and ammunitions and zough !to the Dungeon ! "

But, well, for a secluded dungeon, it seems awfully frequented ! Lot of step traces, marks on the walls, dead monsters everywhere... the only real threat seems to be wandering animals near the entrance, a bunch of goblins who, if asked will say they arrived only this night, and auto-reloading traps.

When they do begin to use resources, there seems to be missing arrows, potions, spells components... even that very special resource they particularly protected in a magically sealed bag... and the steps traces... looks a lot like the one of your shoes. And those traces on the wall are like the one adventurers left behind to see if they already went there, and surely the leader once used marks like this. And they begin to remember some big dude escorting them to the inn in a dreamy haze. And the thief has lost a level ! as if resurrected or something ! Hell, if there is a druid in the gang, they can realize that one of them is actually a freakin' KOBOLD ! If you are facetious, from that point, there are "the lich is a lie the lich is a lie the lich is a lie" inscriptions on the walls...

Proactive players will realize that they, somehow, already done this dungeon, and when confronted with the obvious, big, sculpted final door, they will use all protection spells they know and will be confronted with, well, a golem holding patches of oblixi. You tell this only if they do their save, of course. Otherwise... "You wake up at the Inn in the Village near the Dungeon. Yesterday, you...", here, the player screams, you cut to the last door and try again...

Would they make the save, well, the room is the final one in the dungeon, full stop. On the torso of the golem is written "If you can read this (and remember it), please contact the local noble."

If one of the PCs fails his save, the golem, covered in moss, escorts him out to the edge of the village...

When contacted, the local noble will ask for a report and go something like "Joly good, you only did it four times ! You are the best team to survive the test, you are hired ! " and then begin the real quest against a conspiracy of psionists and other mindfuckers...

The innkeeper will subsequently asks to be paid for a full week, of course...

YojimboC

03-20-2009 06:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pure gold.

Monsieur Meuble

03-20-2009 06:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10128944)

Pure gold.

Thanks a lot.

Ho, and another thing about obliviax : they are supposed to be intelligent. Well, they may be conscious and all, but they are actually pretty stupid when you talk to them : as they keep eating one each other memories from day one, groups of obliviax can't learn anything ! When contacted telepathically (dangerous !) or discussed with by any other means, all they say is "lol wut ?"

This, of course, is valid only for groups of obliviax. A patch of obliviax alone can actually learn things and remember them and gain experience and cunning. If an adventurous wizard, his mind protected by all kind of spell, try to tame/educate one, the patch can learn to control its hunger and only attack enemies or victims of the mage...

And now I have this vision of an evil wizard who did this trick a lot actually and raised a whole colony of civilized mosses, who see him as a messiah or a god or something. When the master is slain by the PCs, the patches allies with the surviving familiars, golems, domesticated monsters and such to use them as mount (or be brainwashed into obedience)(yes, selective eating can do that...) to pursue them to the end of the world and avenge the moss messiah ! Can be fun to be escorted to a dark alley by some bum in a hazed trance to be confronted a bunch of mosses strapped on the back of a cat, screaming in a high-pitched herbal voice "Death to the deicides ! "

Or to have them as the mastermind behind the inevitable "all the dudes the PCs wronged ally together" scenario.

noisms

03-20-2009 10:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Poltergeist

Another 'barely a monster' monster (we've had a few of these recently, what with the Phantom and the Retch Tree), a Poltergeist is basically an invisible ghost which throws things. Thrown objects cause no damage (even knives and swords are treated as 'near misses' if they hit), but simply cause the target to flee in terror.

Nevertheless, the entry has a nice line in cheesy horror, and some fun descriptions: "Poltergeists are always invisible. Those who can see invisible objects describe them as humans whose features have been twisted at the sight of horrors. They wear rags and are covered with chains and other heavy objects that represent a multitude of evil deeds that these creatures have committed against themselves as well as others."; "Poltergeists often haunt families and partnerships. In the latter case, they haunt their place of business, striking almost as much terror in death as they did in life."

Poltergeists are obviously tailor made for a mystery solving adventure - who is the Poltergeist who haunts the old manor, and why is he tied to that particular tapestry? etc. A *phantom shift* - an illusion which takes the character encountering the Poltergeist back in time to reveal why Poltergeistation occurred - can probably form the crescendo of such an adventure. As a rule I don't tend to run that sort of game, but I could see a Poltergeist encounter being used as the first step on a huge narrative arc (probably rather rail-road-y) in which a simple mystery (who is that Poltergeist?) is the tip of an iceberg of all manner of nefarious goings on.

The obligatory 'huh?' note for this entry is that Poltergeists are Lawful Evil in alignment. Surely Chaotic Evil, no?

Sleeper

03-20-2009 10:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10130011)

The obligatory 'huh?' note for this entry is that Poltergeists are Lawful Evil in alignment. Surely Chaotic Evil, no?

Spirits pass on when they die. They don't linger around, like obsessed stalkers. But they leave behind baggage. Unfilled needs, desires, hatreds. While the spirit is enjoying (or not) the afterlife, cosmic synchronicity demands that *something* take care of the unfinished business. That's what PolterCorp is for. They provided minimum (soul)-wage slaves who work dreary little temp jobs, while hoping against hope that some day they'll be recognized for all their hard work and be promoted to full-soul status. Sounds glamorous and dangerous and deadly, but it really isn't. The PolterCorp work in their little boxes, with little understanding of the passions driving the world they someday aspire to be a part of, have to fill out endless reports and justify every single act to petty middle managers, and lack any sense of the big picture. Not to mention a 24/7 work week and a termination package that includes... well, termination. Until that happens, they just plug along. Doing their job. Trying to garner what little pleasure they can out of scaring easily-spooked kids.

Think Beetlejuice or a dark mirror of the Celestial Bureaucracy.

JRM

03-20-2009 07:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10130011)

Poltergeist

snip

Nevertheless, the entry has a nice line in cheesy horror, and some fun descriptions: "Poltergeists are always invisible. Those who can see invisible objects describe them as humans whose features have been twisted at the sight of horrors. They wear rags and are covered with chains and other heavy objects that represent a multitude of evil deeds that these creatures have committed against themselves as well as others."; "Poltergeists often haunt families and partnerships. In the latter case, they haunt their place of business, striking almost as much terror in death as they did in life."

Speaking of cheesy horror, what about the Monstrous Manual illustration? The poltergeist looks like something that just escaped from a Scooby Doo cartoon.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10130011)

The obligatory 'huh?' note for this entry is that Poltergeists are Lawful Evil in alignment. Surely Chaotic Evil, no?

Or even Chaotic Neutral. While poltergeists may be Spooky and Ooky, they don't seem to be interested in harming or corrupting people for their own ends.

demiurge1138

03-21-2009 02:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10131484)

Speaking of cheesy horror, what about the Monstrous Manual illustration? The poltergeist looks like something that just escaped from a Scooby Doo cartoon.

.

A lot of the undead illustrations give me that feeling--the ghost and haunt are also pretty Scooby Doo-ful, and the huecuva looks like it's from an episode rejected for being "too scary".

Kakita Kojiro

03-21-2009 08:42 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10130011)

"Poltergeists are always invisible. Those who can see invisible objects describe them as humans whose features have

been twisted at the sight of horrors. They wear rags and are covered with chains and other heavy objects that represent a multitude of evil deeds that these creatures have committed against themselves as well as others."

Covered with chains and objects that represent stuff? They're doomed to an eternity of wearing... evil charm bracelets?

Brandi

03-21-2009 10:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10134613)

Covered with chains and objects that represent stuff? They're doomed to an eternity of wearing... evil charm bracelets?

Shout-out to Dickens there.

JRM

03-21-2009 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10133021)

A lot of the undead illustrations give me that feeling--the ghost and haunt are also pretty Scooby Doo-ful, and the huecuva looks like it's from an episode rejected for being "too scary".

Yes, the ghost illustration has that "we couldn't come up with a scary monster for this episode, so just pretend this old man in a hooded robe is Fear Incarnate" look about it, which occurred in those Scooby Doo episodes where you wonder why on earth they are running away from a ghostly witch that just looks like your auntie Maude with a big fake mole stuck on her nose, going "woo-ooo-oo".
:)

Although none of them compare to the Fiend Folio's **Sheet Phantom**. A nice idea conceptually, but boy does the illustration fall short! :D

Incidentally, I pulled that picture from Head Injury Theatre's "[CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF VERY STUPID MONSTERS](#)", a page I hope you're all familiar with.

Mr. Teapot

03-21-2009 09:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Brandi (Post 10134870)
Shout-out to Dickens there.

Jacob Marley in the house, yo.

New theory: Rap stars wear heavy gold chains as punishment for their evil deeds.

noisms

03-22-2009 08:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10136485)
Jacob Marley in the house, yo.

New theory: Rap stars wear heavy gold chains as punishment for their evil deeds.

Mr. T must be one evil fellow.

Inyssius

03-22-2009 09:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10138314)
Mr. T must be one evil fellow.

And Hurricane Katrina was [penance for his sins?](#) Now *there's* an adventure seed!

noisms

03-22-2009 09:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pudding, Deadly

Unfortunately, this entry doesn't include Christmas puddings which attack you with a knife or rice puddings laced with arsenic, but "voracious, puddinglike monsters composed of groups of cell colonies that scavenge and hunt for food." I'd

like to know how they gained the 'pudding' moniker.

Anyway, there's something nicely single-minded about the puddings, with their near-indestructibility, lack of morale score, and ability to follow you *anywhere*, no matter where you try to hide. As I think I've said before, I find the idea of mindless monsters which just want to kill you and won't give up until they have (zombies, puddings, golems, the Borg) far more scary than, say, ghosts or vampires. Something about the unreasoning will to destroy.

There are four kinds of pudding detailed, though "other pudding types are optional, at the DM's discretion". Is this the only entry in the book which explicitly says: make stuff up if you want to?

Black Pudding

Not the variety of delicious English breakfast foodstuff, but an acidic rust monster-cum amoeba which dissolves even magical armour and generally otherwise makes life difficult.

White Pudding

These lurk in ice and snow and are 50% likely to be mistaken for it. Those percentages for camouflage success are getting ridiculous. The things live on ice, but don't mind snacking on vegetable or animal matter from time to time.

Dun Pudding

These live in deserts and other arid regions, though a 'percentage for camouflage success' isn't given.

Brown Pudding

A marsh dweller, with a 'tough skin' but a rather weak attack.

So let's experiment with something: **Design a Pudding**. The Monstrous Manual says it's okay for us to make up new kinds, so let's do it. Hit me with your pudding ideas!

Inyssius

03-22-2009 10:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Blue Pudding

This ooze is common in the Elemental Plane of Air, although some exist on the prime material. Semitranslucent, it spreads into odd twisting shapes (rather origami-like, at times) to catch the wind. Being thin, perfectly shaded, and partially translucent, it has a 50% chance of being mistaken for clear sky or very light, distant cloud formations even viewed from within 100 ft. In some places, huge colonies of these creatures web the lower stratosphere. On occasion, a blue pudding is forced downward due to wind conditions, slamming with great speed to the ground and splashing across the terrain. This rarely kills or injures the pudding, though anything caught beneath it is unlikely to survive.

Gray Pudding

Also known as the "assassin custard", this small ooze is gifted with astonishingly fast locomotion for the ambulatory slime that it is. It lurks in cracks and shady corners during the day, slowly digesting whatever food it can find. When night falls, the gray pudding darts out of its hiding place towards the nearest warm animal it can sense, then devours as much of the animal as it can before sunrise. Often, grown too large to fit in its previous hole but still too small for mitosis, the pudding chooses to shelter from the sun inside the still-warm, half-devoured corpse of its prey.

Thane of Fife

03-22-2009 10:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

One of the earliest d&d sort-of-things I played was a TSR boardgame called Classic Dungeon, where the players basically ran around killing monsters and taking their stuff. Anyway, most of the enemies were pretty self-explanatory, but the Black Pudding confused the heck out of me. I probably spent hours trying to figure out how black pudding was a monster.

I love how the Black Pudding is Uncommon - they're as common underground as snakes are up here!

Sleeper

03-22-2009 10:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

They're acid and acrid, salty and laden with sorrow and loss. What if puddings are tears, not of gods, but of those who came before? Powerful cthonic entities who were not so weak that they needed the worship of multitudes of mortal beings to grant them power; rather, their power was pure primordial, utterly selfish and not dependent on any outside source. Yet the gods slew them, with the collective power gleaned from the frail and inferior beings that started to fill the cosmos. They died, and their bodies and bones formed the mountains and the earth; their blood, the rivers that pool in the vast oceans. Those bodies no longer remember, except perhaps in the deepest heart of the greatest mountains, but the sadness infused in their tears lingers forever. The puddings don't think or reason, they simply *know*. At some primal level they remember, and lacking the ability to lash out at the gods themselves they instead hungrily devour the god's food: Us.

Inyssius

03-22-2009 10:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Whoa. You are awesome.

Also, have you been reading Dragon Magazine lately? The Sharn is an amorphous creature made of black oil and incarnate regret, a fractured extrusion of the last remnant of the universe ruined by victorious Tharizdun in a world where primordials had won.

And thanks to your post, I now have a place to use them in my game.

Naxuul

03-22-2009 11:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Green Pudding: Living in tropical forests it hides itself among trees(40% likely to be undetected while in foliage) and drops onto living targets that pass under it. It's acidic skin has gained a coating of paralytic poisons from having digested venomous tropical plants and it's victims must save vs death or be stuck paralyzed, unable to scream as it digests them.

-Naxuul

Sleeper

03-22-2009 11:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Prismatic pudding

Ever cast a *prismatic wall*? Ever follow that up with a *permanency*? Pretty nifty defense. For a few centuries.

After that, the wall starts to melt. Slowly. Until it becomes a pool. A glittering, dazzling, multicolored pool. Prophets have gained inspiration looking in those pools. Suicides find them... attractive. Wizards and warlords have tried to tap their power. Which never quite works, by the way.

But all that attention sometimes causes a reaction. As the centuries turn into millennia, the pool starts to absorb all those impressions. Starts to awaken. Become sentient if not sapient. Finally, it extends a pseudopod. And starts moving. A prismatic pudding has formed, and leaves dazzling confusion in its wake. People freeze and stare, at the mesmerizing play of colors. Then they dissolve; or turn to stone; die writhing from poison; become insane; flash as if fried by fire, cold, or lightning; or simply vanish from this cosmos, when it runs over their foot.

But inside, it still boils with the influence of the minds that touched it. Dreams of conquest and power, the screams of the dying or the wishes of the suicidal, the existential needs of seers. So it quests, unable to speak and gain temporal power, but endlessly curious about the varieties of death and dancing along the paths of destiny to find those who serve as the axis around which all the possible futures twist and shift. The prismatic pudding is attracted to the predestined, the fated. For instance, the PCs.

Sleeper

03-22-2009 11:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10138659)

Also, have you been reading Dragon Magazine lately? The Sharn is an amorphous creature made of black oil and incarnate regret, a fractured extrusion of the last remnant of the universe ruined by victorious Tharizdun in a world where primordials had won.

Thank you. Nope. I skimmed a few issues of *Dragon* when it was free, but since I'm not playing in a 4E game I never subscribed (I haven't even got around to reading the core books I picked up last year). I'm vaguely aware of some of the cosmology, but know almost nothing about the details.

Inyssius

03-22-2009 11:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10138768)

Thank you. Nope. I skimmed a few issues of Dragon when it was free, but since I'm not playing in a 4E game I never subscribed (I haven't even got around to reading the core books I picked up last year). I'm vaguely aware of some of the cosmology, but know almost nothing about the details.

It's not terribly relevant to the 4E cosmology in any case, since "those who came before" *didn't* win the war at the beginning of time. There could exist, however, an alternate universe in which the primordials did win; and in that world, perhaps, the Elder Elemental Eye (the mad god [Tharizdun](#)) could have actually succeeded in fulfilling his batshit loco semi-omnicidal schemes before ascending to A Higher Plane of Existence (yes, *another* one. On top of the whole overgod, ruler-of-everything deal). And that's where sharns might have come from.

(By the way: everything after "One rumor" under his Fourth Edition heading is ~~completely wrong. Utter nonsense, contradicting a thousand things and supporting none; baseless, and badly written to boot~~ gone now, bitches! User participation for the win!)

Sleeper

03-22-2009 12:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Blood pudding

Let's speak of Scandinavia. A certain Food Network show has been spreading a rumor. Take a big 'ol pot. Fill it with blood. Presumably, cows or something. I forget. I think I would have remembered drained human bodies, but it's likely that would have just made me block out that whole part of the episode. If it happened.

But anyway, the pot. Full of blood. Then stir in chunks of fat. Not rendered from human flesh. Again, I would have remembered. No trapping and fattening up little kids with gingerbread or whatever the modern equivalent is, perhaps Snickers. Then grab a stomach. Not a big stomach, but... well, let's not go there. Really, they wouldn't show that on basic cable, would they?

Anyway redux. Fill that stomach with blood and fat. Tie it off. Drop in a boiling pot of water. Let it sit. The whole thing apparently congeals, into an almost-bread like texture. You can slice the rich, almost black-red slices. Looks a bit like a dark sponge. And then just take a bite.

Now, imagine ogres. With a big mortar and pestle. Grinding peasants into gruel. Fat and flesh and bone shards. Strain out the bigger chunks. Skin them first of course. Scrape off the fat into the pot. What's left is blood and fat, mostly. With a few impurities. Keep the skin in one piece, have some natty elf prisoner sew it back together. Spoon in the messy slop. Drop in a pot of water on a boil. Bring in the friend neighborhood hag to chant and hum and cackle, dance naked screaming around the bonfire, wave feathers in the air and cut thumbs and spackle the start of a path with blood. That kind of thing. You can play drums, have lots of fun. Eat a few hors d'oeuvres: halflings stuffed with herbs and spitted, then roasted until they pop. The humans in the villages down below will close their shutters and try to pretend they didn't hear anything.

When the hag is done, lying there all drained and wasted by the pot, saggy old breasts heaving, bony legs trembling... something will seem to come over the edge of the boiling pot. No, not water, bubbling and burbling over the rim. Something darker, semi-liquid, semi-solid. A mass. *Plop*.

Down it falls, and then quickly before it singes too badly it scuttles away from the fire. You think you saw something shaped like a human, except well, squishy. Rolling in waves or flopping. Maybe along the way it picks up the hag. Who cares? But it's dark, and blends into the night. Everyone with nicked thumbs is ignored, as long as they don't get in the way. So it drifts away, downslope, along the marked path. Looking for more blood, more fat.

That's why you do it uphill. Lacking more than the most basic of directions, the thing goes down. The bulky sloppy skin thrashes its way through the underbrush, into the village. Too massive to slide under doors or suchnot, it simply pounds them down. The kirk, the inn, a few pastoral farms along the way. Slopping over the humans. Extruding the impurities that got through the net. The bone shards, like needles. Cutting them up, getting at the blood. Sucking it down. Slicing open the skin, sliding fat pseudopods inside to absorb all the fat. Shortly afterwards, the human usually dies. Barring magic of course.

The thing gets bigger. Black-red heart of semi-congealed goo, wrapped in tanned and heat-toughened human skin. Eventually, it eats too much and starts to ooze blood, leaving a dark trail behind. But even that won't sate it. Gobble, gobble. Finally, it just bursts, spraying half-decayed blood and fat all over the place. The end.

Now sleep well, my little ogre. May your dreams be filled with the sweet wails of dying humans.

JohnBiles

03-22-2009 01:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Figgy Pudding

Figgy Pudding is the revenge of every mother who warned their child that the sewer monsters would get them if they didn't eat all their food.

When food, especially desserts are wasted, the remains end up in the sewer. If a city is unlucky, the food slops into some area with residual magic and comes to life. At first it is content to roam the sewers, devouring Otyughs and eating up wasted food. But eventually that is not enough. Animated by the sheer power of urban myth, it rises from the sewers and begins to roam the streets, a great sloppy mess of half-digested food which slimes its way in pursuit of its true prey--bad children who don't eat all their food, causing it to go to waste.

Or that's what my mother told me when I refused to risk eating Uncle Brownbottle's Yule Fruitcake.

Monsieur Meuble

03-22-2009 05:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

God pudding : an unknown, quite common and generally harmless kind of pudding. You probably all have seen those great temples with the ceiling all illuminated in fantastic lights, obvious proof of the favor of the gods and the power of faith ? Well, it's not really just that. In fact, the ceiling of all those temples are colonized by a fine crust of transparent pudding feeding on divine powers. They capture either the power of the god focusing his attention on the temple and the faith of the prayer going to the Heavens, and in the process, the pudding generates light.

They became so omnipresent by traveling alongside clerics and priests. As they cast divine spells and have gods focusing on them on a daily base, they appears as a great food source and so some pudding follow them and install themselves in the next temple they visit. If possible, the pudding will try to be just over the cleric so as to capture bits of divine power during preparation or casting. So the light accompanying said casting while underground.

Now, there is two circumstances during which a god pudding can become dangerous : if starving or if overstimulated. Starving, like if it follows a priest who do not use any divine powers for days or weeks. It can then become frenzied at the moment its host connect to the divine once again and attacks it, tries to force itself inside its skull to eat its pineal gland or whatever to sustain itself on raw divine power.

Overstimulated, as in, if a high-level or worst, epic divine spell is cast in the climax of a great religious ceremony while everybody is exulting in faith, the puddings on the ceiling can enter in the equivalent of a sugar frenzy, fall from the walls and attack everyone !

If discovered for what it is in all its "mundanity" (yep, D&D worlds have a different definition of "mundane"), temples all around the world will be in a difficult position, because, well, the disinfection from god puddings is a simple security matter and will allow divine power to flow more easily... on the other hand, they make a bitching decoration and are a good indicator of the faithfulness of the attendants and how this holy place is supra holy...

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10138461)

Pudding, Deadly

Unfortunately, this entry doesn't include Christmas puddings which attack you with a knife or rice puddings laced with arsenic, but "voracious, puddinglike monsters composed of groups of cell colonies that scavenge and hunt for food." I'd like to know how they gained the 'pudding' moniker.

Not necessarily, in Gary Gygax's ***The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror***, now available as a **free download** from wizards, there was indeed a Black Pudding disguise as a dessert!

Anyhow, regarding puddings I find the four varieties a bit samey, apart from some differences in how fast they dissolve substances/victims and their colour, there's not much variation in them.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10138461)

*So let's experiment with something: **Design a Pudding**. The Monstrous Manual says it's okay for us to make up new kinds, so let's do it. Hit me with your pudding ideas!*

Of the ones people have posted so far, I like Inyssius's Gray Pudding the best. As for another one, hmm... versions of this already exists in D&D, but how about:

Crystal Pudding

With a transparent, colourless body, this pudding is almost indistinguishable from water. When moving, it looks like a small stream flowing in impossible directions - uphill, around obstacles, away from fire. Also known as the Oasis Pudding, since it often lurks in desert pools waiting to feed upon thirsty animals and travellers. After a long drought an oasis pool may be nothing but crystal pudding. It is also found in freshwater lakes and seas, scouring a path free of life while waiting for larger animals to blunder into its body, which is 90% invisible in the water.

Oasis puddings do not dissolve stone or metal, but can flow through the gaps in any armour in a round. Salt will 'melt' them, doing 1-6 damage per pound, explaining why they do not live in the ocean.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Or how about a non-deadly pudding?

Death Pudding

Despite its name and appearance, this foul-smelling green-black slime is harmless to living creatures, for

it can only dissolve dead tissues. If a Death Pudding covers a human it will only digest their hair and the 'dead' portions of their finger- and toe-nails. Unfortunately, it will also eat every other scrap of non-living organic material they are carrying, including provisions, sacks, backpacks, clothes and shoes, scabbards and the leather holding their armour together.

A death pudding's cell colonies are very small and motile, allowing it to move fast for a pudding (12") and penetrate the gaps of any armour in a round.

Death puddings are sometimes deliberately cultivated to be used as waste disposals (much to the anger of the Otyugh Sewer Workers' Guild), for the cleansing of infected wounds, and dealing with unwanted undead.

It's the Puddings' answer to the Rust Monster.

DMH

03-22-2009 08:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The cata-pudding can melt stone and uses that ability to make ammo. The boulders it throws are mechanically identical to the fire giant's. One of the larger puddings, it can hold 6 boulders while sticking to a ceiling and fires one per round. Some use stone that shatters on impact and causes 3d6 points of damage to everyone within 20' (save for half).

Wave puddings are fast swimmers that sink ships to get at the crew. They look like waves moving much faster than any normal wave and cause impact damage before starting to consume a wooden hull.

Magma puddings are a danger because they have an odd tendency to seep into wells. The absence of water and a bright red glow indicates the danger before the pudding erupts onto the surface (becoming a lava pudding). They don't survive on the surface for long, but I doubt the burning village or city will care.

Wood puddings are normally in the form of a tree. Only when it is cut down does it revert to the pudding form. A nastier version stays in wood form until burned or severely dehydrated. This means furniture and interior walls may spontaneously turn into puddings with low humidity.

noisms

03-22-2009 09:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Great stuff guys. Seriously. I'm sure the regular commenters on this thread could come up with an entire new Monstrous Manual all on your own.

Sleeper

03-22-2009 11:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10139746)

The cata-pudding can melt stone and uses that ability to make ammo. The boulders it throws are mechanically identical to the fire giant's. One of the larger puddings, it can hold 6 boulders while sticking to a ceiling and fires one per round. Some use stone that shatters on impact and causes 3d6 points of damage to everyone within 20' (save for

half).

I rather like this one. Silly, but silly in a very D&D way. Scales well, too. You could have little "baby" puddin's spitting sling stones.

Anyway...

Dragon pudding

Dragons are notorious for their indiscriminate appetites, but nobody is quite sure how this pudding actually came about. Sages speculate wildly, as they usually do, about bodily fluids mixing with one of the standard types of ooze or pudding. But, again as usual, they probably don't have the foggiest idea what they're talking about.

The pudding has a dense and rough surface, as if made of dragonhide. Inside, it is fluid. The interior is caustic, and strikes of sufficient force to penetrate the skin or membrane will cause it to erupt and spit an fiery acid. With a contortion of its body, it is usually able to fire its "blood" in the direction it desires, generally to the detriment of its attacker.

Without exploiting an injury, the dragon pudding is forced to use its pseudopods to pummel its opponents, causing abrasions and injury as if struck by a huge sharkskin-covered blackjack. A carnivore, it engulfs and gradually absorbs prey by osmosis. The thick skins means process takes hours to days, and the swollen pudding is immobile and vulnerable during this period.

Pudding wyrms

The eldest dragon puddings become known as pudding wyrms, and start to develop a scabby crust on their skin. This crust starts to resemble proto-scales, and as they develop they give the pudding more of a structure. The tendency to move in one direction causes them to elongate, and take on a form similar to hydra (the animal, not the monster). On the bottom, they develop a thicker set of scales that can be retracted, exposing the inner juices. This enables the pudding wyrms to slide over their prey, retract the scales, and engulf them immediately. This is a considerably more efficient eating strategy than the standard dragon puddings', and can be used on living, struggling prey.

Caterpillar pudding

Not a true pudding at all, the so-called caterpillar pudding is actually an aggregate organism composed of the fruiting bodies of many members of a colonial fungus. From the top, it resembles a dark brown pudding with a bumpy surface. Each of the bumps is a cap, similar in appearance to the pileus of a mushroom. Each of the caps is the fruiting body of a separate individual in the colony. The fungus reacts to attacks by splitting, leaving any injured caps behind, and the rest of the "pudding" rifts along the line of the wound, separating into two or more pieces. Each of these pieces can survive as a lone entity, though if caterpillar puddings from the same colonial organism meet they will merge back again into a single organism. A large or area attack can cause a complete fissuring, with each of the hundreds of separate caps becoming its own organism temporarily, scuttling around madly until they start to join back together again. Underneath the caps, the gills have been modified to resemble cilia (or even legs; this is the source of the common name), and wave and ripple to move the organism forward. Each cap also holds spores, like a puffball. A strike will cause them to burst, causing hallucinations in most humanoids.

chronostrike

03-22-2009 11:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Here's one I created a while ago. It's formatted for 3.5, but that doesn't detract from the concept.

"The pungent odor of fermentation assaults your nose. As if from nowhere, a putrescent yellow sludge streaks toward you, its mass teeming with what appear to be countless rice grains.

HORRID RICE PUDDING CR 5

Always N Medium ooze (swarm)

Init +6; Senses blind, blindsight 60ft.; Listen -5

Languages –

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 12

(+2 size, +6 dex)

Hp 61 (6 HD)

Immune ooze immunities, swarm immunities

Resist fire 10, sonic 10, half damage from piercing and slashing

Fort +5, Ref +9, Will -3

Weakness swarm vulnerabilities

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee swarm (2d6)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Base Atk +4; Grp –

Atk Options distraction

Abilities Str 6, Dex 24, Con 16, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1

SA distraction, fermentation, adhesive

SQ swarm traits, ooze traits, cohesive form

Feats –

Skills –

Advancement –

Distraction (Ex) Fortitude DC 16, nauseated 1 round, The save DC is Constitution-based.

Cohesive Form (Ex) A horrid rice pudding is composed of fine creatures, but, because of the coterminous slime, it is considered a swarm of tiny creatures instead. A horrid rice pudding is susceptible to spells and effects that target a single creature.

Fermentation (Ex) Any creature that begins its turn with a horrid rice pudding in its square is subject to its poisonous vapors. Inhalation, Fortitude DC 16, 1d3 Wis/-. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Adhesive (Ex) Any creature that takes damage from a horrid rice pudding's swarm attack must make a strength check DC 16 or be entangled for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A horrid rice pudding is a symbiotic creature composed of a colony of fine white aberrations living in a sentient slurry of sugar and water. It acts only to feed, seeking out any form of soft organic matter to satisfy its hunger. The ooze provides the relationship with its mobility, and the colony reciprocates by devouring any creatures the ooze touches, converting it into a paste that the ooze can then consume.

I don't know the advancement rules, so I left that blank. If anyone wants to use this, I declare it OGL."

JRM

03-22-2009 11:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Spitting Pudding

A vile-looking mound of puce-yellow slime, this pudding can spit globs of itself up to 15" away. A Spitting Pudding loses 1 hit dice for every glob it spits out, and cannot reduce its own HD below 6. Each glob is a small pudding capable of doing as much damage as its parent, when it finished devouring any food in its vicinity it returns to its parent mass which then recovers a lost HD.

Sticky Pudding

A semi-translucent white-grey pudding, this pudding does little damage but is coated in an adhesive stronger than that of a mimic. The Sticky Pudding covers its territory in a layer of this adhesive mucus, which is almost invisible in poor light, then patrols it to devour creatures that blunder into its glue and become stuck. They are somehow able to sense through their mucus whenever a large creature becomes stuck, and slowly but inexorably crawl towards them to be engulfed and digested.

Thane of Fife

03-23-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Off Pudding

The off pudding is a brownish-green in color and smells terrible. Any creature which smells this creature must make a saving throw vs. poison or be unable to eat (and hold down) any food for 2d8 hours. The off pudding itself feeds primarily upon creatures which it has starved to death, as it can be very difficult to locate and kill.

JRM

03-23-2009 12:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10140202)

Off Pudding

The off pudding is a brownish-green in color and smells terrible. Any creature which smells this creature must make a saving throw vs. poison or be unable to eat (and hold down) any food for 2d8 hours. The off pudding itself feeds primarily upon creatures which it has starved to death, as it can be very difficult to locate and kill.

I'd have thought it mainly feeds off the food the creatures were unable to hold down.

Which rather reminds me of the insect in one of Expeditionary Retreat's d20 supplements (A Magical Society: Ecology and Culture if I remember correctly) which had a magical power to persuade passing lifeforms to produce the food it prefers - let's just say it was a variety of dung beetle at leave it at that.

Sleeper

03-23-2009 01:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Peasant pudding

A vaguely greyish color and slightly tacky, like wallpaper paste. Dissolves almost anything organic, but slowly. You'd have to set it on your skin for days before it started to burn. Flavorless, but modestly filling and at least somewhat nutritious. Not a full balanced meal but any means, but you won't starve on it, either. Hence, the name. Peasants toss it in a barn with all the organic leavings, from horse and sheep dung to straw and chaff and rotted fruits and vegetables. And in lean times, they can stretch their meals with a little pudding, and make do. Probably saved more lives than *cure light wounds*.

JRM

03-23-2009 02:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Peas Pudding

Unlike other puddings, where the individual animals in the colony keep in contact, the pieces of a peas pudding colony spend most of their life separated from each other, communicating with each other via pheromones. These monsters are found in habitats without a regular source of food, where meals are often rare and substantial, usually subterranean labyrinths.

Each animal of the peas pudding can enter a cyst-like state in which it can survive without food or water for decades. In this form, it resembles an inanimate piece of detritus like a dried-out pea, piece of gravel or misshapen cave-pearl, depending on local conditions and the particular strain of peas pudding. The cysts are scattered several inches apart, and the entire encysted monster can cover an area of ground up to 80 feet in diameter.

The pudding remains in this state until something edible comes in contact with some of its 'peas'. As soon as a pea tastes contact with animal or vegetable matter, it almost instantly metamorphs into a livid green flattened mushy-looking blob and rolls onto the food and begins to eat. At the same time, it emits a scent that alerts the rest of the colony to awaken and feed. The first round any creatures upon the pudding take 1 point of damage per hit, the second round they may take 1-3 damage, the third round 1-6, the fourth round they would each take 2-12 and in the fifth the pudding delivers its full damage of 4-24 per hit. If any of the peas are crushed they release a stronger scent that accelerates the awakening process, since this either indicates an intruder that's heavy enough to be a substantial meal or one that's a threat. In such cases the intruder takes no damage on the first round, since they have killed the pea they stepped upon, but take 1-6 on the second and the full 4-24 on the third.

Soon the entire colony will have gathered into one or more masses around any meals that have wandered onto their body. Once these initial meals are eaten, the peas pudding coalesces into a single mass 3-8 feet in diameter and roams around randomly to see if it can scent any further meals. If it fails to find anything after a few hours, the pudding spreads itself out tenfold and returns to its dormant state.

JRM

03-23-2009 03:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10140152)

Here's one I created a while ago. It's formatted for 3.5, but that doesn't detract from the concept.

"The pungent odor of fermentation assaults your nose. As if from nowhere, a putrescent yellow sludge streaks toward you, its mass teaming with what appear to be countless rice grains.

SNIP

I don't know the advancement rules, so I left that blank. If anyone wants to use this, I declare it OGL."

Well swarms don't usually advance, so you don't need to worry about that if you don't want to. Oozes tend to advance to three times their base HD, with a size category raise for the last third (so a 6HD Ooze would be 7-12 HD = size; 13-18 HD = size+1).

Dex 24 seems rather high to me, but it's your beastie.

Espresso

03-23-2009 07:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The thought of how otyughs would approach religion is a fascinating (and disturbing) one.

Ratoslov

03-23-2009 07:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Life Pudding and *Death Pudding*, both the results of really poorly-thought out magical experiments involving crossing positive and negative energies with huge amoebas. Life pudding is a softly glowing blue, while Death Pudding glows purple. Life Pudding is invaluable for making healing potions, and capturing one alive is excellent. They feed upon undead by making them explode with positive energy; when threatened, they'll seize upon a living creature and make it explode as well. Death Pudding is much rarer and much more dangerous; it absorbs any life it touches, and raises it in undead form. *Any life*. Ever seen an entire forest of undead trees and grass, with roving bands of undead squirrels? That happened once. That was the fault of *one* Death Pudding. Individually, they're not that dangerous, though.

DMH

03-23-2009 08:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Brain puddings are wizards who tried life extension and succeeded, sort of. They don't have hands but can speak and most have servants who do the physical part of research. They don't age any more and can eat just about anything. Unfortunately they are vulnerable to torches and pitchforks.

For Spelljammer, there is the moon pudding. It can be from size A to E (using the planet scale in the boxset). They start as size A bodies and try to crash onto larger planets, consuming everything.

Stone puddings don't have a strong acid. They pick up objects, stone and metal, and use them to smash prey to bloody bits. Minimum damage is 5d8.

I mentioned holy droplets in my Mutant Future thread- a swarm of tiny, intelligent puddings that worship light. They kill people who don't give them light at night, though a continual light spell usually results in their starving to death.

Sleeper

03-23-2009 08:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pudding molds

Nobody's quite sure where these came from. They're odd at best, and trying to pin them to one culture and one time period always results in a lot of head scratching. What they are is paired blocks, carved into the relief shape of various objects. Molds, like those used to cast metals. Except pour a pudding into one, and somehow it sets. Permanently, into that shape. There's one in the shape of a giant ewer, which isn't terribly useful. There's also an orb, a strange burst pattern, and the best known one: A cast in the shape of a sword. Apparently a bronze shortsword because iron and steel don't need to be that thick to be strong. But pour a black pudding into there, or a gray pudding, and you have a black sword or a gray sword with all the properties of the original pudding. Even hunger. Left unfed, they starve. Which

means it's important to make the right hilt. One that doesn't dissolve, and doesn't let it dissolve *you*.

demiurge1138

03-24-2009 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10139684)

*Not necessarily, in Gary Gygax's **The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror**, now available as a **free download** from wizards, there was indeed a Black Pudding disguise as a dessert!*

Which reminds me. The very first D&D game I ran was a sprawling Gygaxian dungeon crawl, as conceived by a kid who (at that point) had never actually read a sprawling Gygaxian dungeon crawl. The dungeon was the stronghold of a kobold sorcerer with a wicked sense of humor. In his pantry, the adventurers found such things as Frosted Unlucky Charms, cans of "Sprite" (poor, delicious sprites) and a giant wooden barrel labeled "Pudding".

Guess what they immediately opened. And regretted opening.

Lukas Sjöström

03-24-2009 04:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10139684)

*Not necessarily, in Gary Gygax's **The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror**, now available as a **free download** from wizards, there was indeed a Black Pudding disguise as a dessert!*

Black pudding for dessert? :confused:

Monsieur Meuble

03-24-2009 06:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Rage Pudding or, as a visitor from an other universe called it "the Doom Comics Guy Pudding", nobody knows why : Living a mysterious life circle, the rage pudding eats guts. From the inside. Sages supposed that they develop in two phases. The young live in the guts of large herbivorous animals, feeding of what is inside with harming the host, then the beastly get eaten by a carnivore and inside the predator, the larvae become adults, reproduce, slowly digest the host from inside but also give him a predation / eating frenzy, resulting in a larger area of action and lots of pooping in which nests the eggs, that will get eaten by an herbivore, and so on.

The important thing is that barbarian tribes will seeks carnivore carcass or, well, hunt the predators into becoming carcasses and search in the guts of the deceased a gelatinous red mass and store it, giving it occasionally bits of guts to keep it alive until needed.

Needed for what ? Well, the coalescent gel of the rage pudding contains actually a shitload of adrenaline, testosterone and other rage-inducing chemicals. So as to make the predator host travel a lot, kill a lot, eat a lot and shit a lot.

So, just before the battle, barbarian warriors in a dire need of a boost to take a glorious last stand or something ingest the rage pudding, allowing for several more instances of Berserk trance a day, at the cost of ultimately die in a painful manner. Rage pudding eaters having survived their supposed last battle will often prefer to stay in berserk trance permanently instead of feeling their guts being slowly digested from inside, and so become dangerous for every one around and will probably have to exile themselves far away in a moment of consciousness and pain, so spreading the pudding farther away...

It's a good thing that no rage-pudding-induced barbarian has been arrested by the police forces of a large town (as they try to NOT stay in town while berserk), because he would probably have to execrate and its offals would fall into the sewers and next thing you know you have othyughs running everywhere shouting "U ! U haz hueg gutz ! RIP AND TEAR ! "

On the other hand, some Evil Military Leaders, having heard of those glorious shamanic barbaric traditions, have began to stock and breed rage puddings to administer them their foot soldiers before the battle (any battle) without telling them about the side effects, just that it will make them stronger or something. So, you turned a bunch of 1st level men-at-arms in berserk 1st level men-at-arms and if they survive the battle, well, it's like it's someone who matters who will die painfully or, well, spend their last hours blindly burning and pillaging everything, as if they would have done differently !

noisms

03-24-2009 11:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sorry for the brief delay. I cracked a few ribs playing football the other day, so sitting at the computer for long periods ain't pretty. Great puddings, everyone.

Quaggoth

Everybody's favourite polar-bear-crossed-with-a-neanderthal, Quaggoths are basically big ugly white things which go "Ug!" a lot, though with some propensity towards psionics.

There isn't a huge amount to say about them. There's nothing wrong with them, but nor is there especially anything inspiring in the background or culture. The 'fallen civilisation' motif is interesting, I suppose: what kind of civilisation did the Old Quaggoths have? What architecture did they build? What knowledge did they uncover? What treasures did they make? Sounds like a job for intrepid adventurers...

demiurge1138

03-24-2009 01:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

For some reason, quaggoths always struck me as much more interesting "crazy killer humanoids" than most of the rest of the MM--orcs, ogres, bugbears, etc. I think it's the multiple cultures thing. There are some quaggoths who believe that they should fight with the weapons the gods gave them and are feral claws-and-teeth berzerkers. Then there are the ones that have learned skills, make weaponry, dye their fur black for camouflage, that sort of thing.

I mean, how often is there a D&D species that isn't a monoculture? Usually you need different sub-races for that sort of thing, but nothing doing here. It's actually just cultural, not mechanical, differences. Very refreshing.

Sleeper

03-24-2009 01:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

"Quaggoth" isn't the best name, but it has a definite pulp-era sword & sorcery feel. I could see Burroughs writing about a monster called a quaggoth.

On the other hand, whoever came up with the name for their shamans in 2E has a lot to answer for: "Thonot" is so not a good name. :p

JRM

03-24-2009 07:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lukas Sjöström (Post 10145133)
Black pudding for dessert? :confused:

How did that typo get in there? I could have sworn I wrote black pudding *disguised* as a dessert. Oh well, it's too late to fix the original post.

Anyhow, in the module in question the grand finale has them invited to a 'victory feast' where the hosts, waiters and most of the dishes are camouflaged monsters. Including the aforesaid Black Pudding, which is masquerading as a plum pudding.

JRM

03-24-2009 07:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10143235)

Brain puddings are wizards who tried life extension and succeeded, sort of. They don't have hands but can speak and most have servants who do the physical part of research. They don't age any more and can eat just about anything. Unfortunately they are vulnerable to torches and pitchforks.

For Spelljammer, there is the moon pudding. It can be from size A to E (using the planet scale in the boxset). They start as size A bodies and try to crash onto larger planets, consuming everything.

Stone puddings don't have a strong acid. They pick up objects, stone and metal, and use them to smash prey to bloody bits. Minimum damage is 5d8.

Hmm, I can see some room for overlap here - maybe the Stone Pudding and the Cata-Pudding are one and the same, they chuck stones at range and wallop opponents with them up close?

As for the Brain Pudding, I'm thinking a sensible superintelligent archmage ooze would create various 'shells' it could pour itself into and walk around in so as to interact with the outside world in the guise of a humanoid. Then when the PCs 'kill' the wizard by splitting its skull so its brains leak out the brains wait for them to leave and then ooze off to insert themselves into their hidden back-up body.

JRM

03-24-2009 07:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Oh, and here's another puddin' to add to the list:

Sponge Pudding

This yellow-white pudding has a foam-like lightweight body, meaning it floats atop water like a cork. A sponge pudding eats flesh, stone and metal more slowly than an average pudding, but is still highly feared for it also eats magic. The pudding possesses complete immunity to magic, any spell cast upon a sponge pudding is absorbed without harm to the pudding, causing it to grow 1 hp per spell level. It can "smell" magic within 12" as if using detect magic, and will slither toward the strongest source it can detect in order to devour it. Slashing weapons do normal damage to a sponge pudding, as does mundane fire and acid.

JRM

03-24-2009 08:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10146503)

Sorry for the brief delay. I cracked a few ribs playing football the other day, so sitting at the computer for long periods ain't pretty. Great puddings, everyone.

Sorry to hear about your injuries Noisms, hope you have a speedy recovery.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10146503)

Quaggoth

Everybody's favourite polar-bear-crossed-with-a-neanderthal, Quaggoths are basically big ugly white things which go "Ug!" a lot, though with some propensity towards psionics.

There isn't a huge amount to say about them. There's nothing wrong with them, but nor is there especially anything inspiring in the background or culture. The 'fallen civilisation' motif is interesting, I suppose: what kind of civilisation did the Old Quaggoths have? What architecture did they build? What knowledge did they uncover? What treasures did they make? Sounds like a job for intrepid adventurers...

For some reason, I'm imagining an ancient Quaggoth civilization with a strong emphasis on fur care. Maybe the reason Quaggoths are so hostile is that they are infested with a variety of lice that make them highly irritable. Thus, it wasn't the wheel or the stirrup which was the invention that brought them into civilization, but the comb. It wasn't until they were free of the perpetual pain of their lice-parasites that the ancient Quaggoths were able to unlock the potential of their psionic gifts and build the mind-empire of the white-furred bearmen, where the most prominent members of their society were indicated by the elaborateness of their coiffeur, which reflected how much leisure/luxury time they possessed and the skill and number of their mind-slaved fur stylists. Obviously, elves and dwarves were the best at this task (elves, of course, are famous for their skill at hairstyling and dwarves created all the jewellery, accessories, fur-curlers and other objects that accentuated their Quaggoth master's fur-style).

The Rebellion of the Barbers was inevitable, and the few surviving Quaggoths fled into the underworld to nurse their hate as the dreaded lice returned to drag them back to brutedom.

DMH

03-24-2009 08:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10146905)

I mean, how often is there a D&D species that isn't a monoculture? Usually you need different sub-races for that sort of thing, but nothing doing here. It's actually just cultural, not mechanical, differences. Very refreshing.

I would agree but for the fact it was already done with lizardmen. If they have more than just primitive vs advanced, then it would have made them more interesting. Divine casters vs psions or psions that concentrate

on different sciences.

Are Barsoom white apes psionic? I know they don't look like quaggoth but I wonder if there was some inspiration (like the osquip).

Lukas Sjöström

03-24-2009 08:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10147665)

How did that typo get in there? I could have sworn I wrote black pudding disguised as a dessert. Oh well, it's too late to fix the original post.

Anyhow, in the module in question the grand finale has them invited to a 'victory feast' where the hosts, waiters and most of the dishes are camouflaged monsters. Including the aforesaid Black Pudding, which is masquerading as a plum pudding.

It wasn't the typo, it was the fact that black pudding is a rather bizarre choice for a dessert. Masquerading as a plum pudding, now that I can understand.

Sleeper

03-24-2009 10:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10147768)

I would agree but for the fact it was already done with lizardmen. If they have more than just primitive vs advanced, then it would have made them more interesting. Divine casters vs psions or psions that concentrate on different sciences.

I like the idea of magical casters vs. psionics. Say the more advanced kind favor magicians as leaders, the iz'zho. The primitive versions are led by the psionic shamans, the thonot. Their apprentices, who have a tendency to go out on lakes and have sex, which results in most of them getting killed by berserk quaggoth wearing white plastic masks, are called the thonotty. :D

Wakboth

03-24-2009 10:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10146938)

"Quaggoth" isn't the best name, but it has a definite pulp-era sword & sorcery feel. I could see Burroughs writing

about a monster called a quaggoth.

Or CAS or REH writing about an ancient, pre-Hyperborean quasi-human civilization of Quaggoths, no doubt worshipping Tsathoggua!

Sleeper

03-24-2009 10:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10148176)

Or CAS or REH writing about an ancient, pre-Hyperborean quasi-human civilization of Quaggoths, no doubt worshipping Tsathoggua!

That definitely fits with the cannibalistic whistling and the rumors that they once dominated the Underdark through conquest and ritual sacrifice. Might also tie it to their hunting ritual... perhaps it's actually a kind of spell or invocation that dedicates the soul of their slain prey to Tsathoggua. This foils a simple *raise dead*, and you could have the PCs run across a terrified woman being hunted by the quaggoth, who jumps off a cliff (to preserve her immortal soul), rather than letting them kill her. The quaggoth might endlessly roam the the Underdark not for the traditional reasons nomads wander (to follow herds of prey, like rothe), but because their practices spook even the other malevolent Underdark races, who drive them away from any new bolthole they find.

demiurge1138

03-25-2009 03:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10148227)

The quaggoth might endlessly roam the the Underdark not for the traditional reasons nomads wander (to follow herds of prey, like rothe), but because their practices spook even the other malevolent Underdark races, who drive them away from any new bolthole they find.

The MM does say that the sages theorize that quaggoths used to have a civilization underground, before its power was broken by the drow, duergar and/or illithids. Perhaps even they were horrified by the quaggoth's cult of Tsathoggua, and waged war against the civilization of soul-stealers in order to protect themselves for their own dark gods.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Rakshasa

Are we at the Rs already? This book really is front-loaded. In fact, I'd guess we're about three quarters through by now. The beautiful dream is almost over. (sniff)

Anyway, I do love the Rakshasa, even if as a Ravenloft beastie I have to officially look down my nose at it. Diterlizzi really outdid himself on the art, for one thing - the picture for this entry is easily one of the top 10 in the book. But I think the designers also did a good job by playing up the folk-tale/mythological aspects of the creature - from the backwards-curving hands to the way a new generation is produced every century to replace the dead. And let's face it - it's also unusual to have a creature from Hindu mythology in the MM. I can't think of many others offhand. In itself that makes the creature stand out.

Rakshasa seem tailor-made to function as lieutenants to BBEGs, though I used to toy with the idea of a Rakshasa empire as part of a game world. (I think Eberron has this? I don't know much about that setting.) I've also thought of reworking Rakshasa as orc-equivalents in an Indian-inspired setting - low-grade demonic beings, the rank-and-file minions of evil gods, with minor illusionary powers and poisonous claws.

YojimboC

03-25-2009 10:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10152857)

Are we at the Rs already? This book really is front-loaded. In fact, I'd guess we're about three quarters through by now. The beautiful dream is almost over. (sniff)

Yeah... what are we going to do when this thread is over?

Quote:

Rakshasa seem tailor-made to function as lieutenants to BBEGs, though I used to toy with the idea of a Rakshasa empire as part of a game world. (I think Eberron has this? I don't know much about that setting.) I've also thought of reworking Rakshasa as orc-equivalents in an Indian-inspired setting - low-grade demonic beings, the rank-and-file minions of evil gods, with minor illusionary powers and poisonous claws.

Yes, Eberron has lots of Rakshasha love and I completely stole the idea for my homebrew -- an Aztec-themed empire by way of Hindu mythology, with a little bit of Kalamar's Pel Brolenon thrown in. Because, as I always say, steal from the best sources.

Rakshashas are great low-level demon types, and they work equally well in city or wilderness or dungeon settings, thanks to their disguise abilities. "Bless" is a pretty low-level spell for an insta-kill on such cool monsters (if I'm remembering correctly), but on the other hand, if the PCs don't know they're up against Shere

Khan, then they may not be prepared.

Hellzon

03-25-2009 10:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10152857)

And let's face it - it's also unusual to have a creature from Hindu mythology in the MM.

Which is really odd, considering the amount of weird beasts roaming that part of folklore.

Rakshasas in 4E are pretty boss. Deva (the new aasimar) reincarnate after death. An evil Deva returns as a Rakshasa (and keeps reincarnating). A blessed crossbow bolt stops the Rakshasa's reincarnation.

...Which kind of implies that 4E Rakshasa are very old souls and have vague memories of having worked on the good side.

Sleeper

03-25-2009 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10152884)

Rakshashas are great low-level demon types, and they work equally well in city or wilderness or dungeon settings, thanks to their disguise abilities. "Bless" is a pretty low-level spell for an insta-kill on such cool monsters (if I'm remembering correctly), but on the other hand, if the PCs don't know they're up against Shere Khan, then they may not be prepared.

D&D never quite seemed to know what to do with them. The original AD&D rakshasa is a *very* weird beast. Weakish fighting type with a few illusory powers, uber-magical defenses, and a strange vulnerability. There was an article way back when in *Dragon* (#84, "Never the same thing twice") where the author sort of scratched his head at the weirdness, but beefed them up by adding rakshasa knights and lords who were fiercer combatants. The article also mentioned the whole backward claw thing, summarized parts of the Ramayana (which is never a bad thing), and even had stats for Ravana. Mystara also had the rakasta, but they were basically just cat people. Stealing more from Indian myth is always a good idea.

ESkemp

03-26-2009 12:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Man, I love rakshasas. I absolutely have intentions of someday placing a rakshasa empire in a D&D game, thoroughly inspired by the descriptions of Golden Lanka from the Ramayana. Perhaps it'll be situated high in the mountains, in a lush tropical valley protected on all sides: making the rakshasas hard to invade, but the good news is that they also can't really expand their borders as easily as you might expect. There would also have to be at least one Vibishana-

type, a sympathetic rakshasa who refutes the path of his bestial kin in favor of enlightenment.

They'd need more default forms, though. The emphasis on cats would have to go; we need beautiful rakshasis, multi-headed kings, demons dark like thunderclouds with golden earrings (one of my favorite descriptions), hags with huge ears... make them grotesque and gorgeous and varied.

Come to think of it, it would be easy to roll everything oni and ogre mage-ish into the rakshasa fold if you want more stat blocks. That would add more diversity, and since they tend to fill similar mythological roles, you'd need only minor tweaking to really come up with a diverse lot of rakshasas.

randomgamer8466

03-26-2009 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pudding pops:

This Lawful Good pudding is a medium brown color and has an air of sophistication; it could play a doctor on a TV show. The pudding pops has the same impersonation ability as a leucrotta but usually just uses this power to mimic funny voices for entertainment purposes. It can speak perfect common although it takes a lot of strangely timed pauses and erratically varies its speaking volume, stressing random words for no comprehensible reason. The strangest trait of the pudding pops is that it makes an excellent father; it might bumble humorously in its parenting tasks but in the end will come through, keeping its children safe and passing on some folksy wisdom in the process. Some adventurers, unable to find babysitters, will leave their own children in the excellent care of a pudding pops.

YojimboC

03-26-2009 12:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by ES Kemp (Post 10153417)

They'd need more default forms, though. The emphasis on cats would have to go; we need beautiful rakshasis, multi-headed kings, demons dark like thunderclouds with golden earrings (one of my favorite descriptions), hags with huge ears... make them grotesque and gorgeous and varied.

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/stolen/

Lukas Sjöström

03-26-2009 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10153334)

Mystara also had the rakasta, but they were basically just cat people.

Cat people love Finns?

Wakboth

03-26-2009 01:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've heard that the "blessed crossbow bolt" thing came from *Kolchak, the Night Stalker*. It doesn't originate in the Indian mythology, as far as I know...

They were changed into more mechanically reasonable critters in 3.5; instead of being instantly slain by blessed crossbow bolts, they had DR/good and piercing, and instead of a blanket immunity to spells, they just had a very high SR.

Anyway, Rakshasas are great monsters; IMO, they make great honorable villains, doing terrible things but with a certain panache and twisted nobility. You can be sure that if your party kicks in the room to a rakshasa's dining room, he will address you politely and offer you some curried baby before you get into the fight.

demiurge1138

03-26-2009 02:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10153695)

Anyway, Rakshasas are great monsters; IMO, they make great honorable villains, doing terrible things but with a certain panache and twisted nobility. You can be sure that if your party kicks in the room to a rakshasa's dining room he will address you politely and offer you some curried baby before you get into the fight.

Last time I ran a rakshasa, he served the party their roasted nemesis with an apple in his mouth and let them sleep under his roof for a night before getting down to business. And they negotiated! The rakshasa put them under geas spells to prevent them from spilling the secret that he was a rakshasa, in exchange for letting them leave with what they came for--it was of little further use to him.

Of course, both the PCs and the rakshasa are planning to betray the hell out of each other at the next possible opportunity.

For some reason, I tend to think of rakshasas as go-to BBEGs, not as lieutenants. A game I ran a long time ago also featured one of the few BBEGs my players never caught up to, the rakshasa art dealer Locke. His modus operandi involved the sale of high level magic items, usually to people/monsters who did not deserve that sort of power, and planning elaborate heists to get at items that were otherwise claimed (although never participating in them directly, of course).

Sleeper

03-26-2009 04:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

To completely mix entirely unrelated things that just happen to have the same name, what about combining rakshasas with Arthur C. Clarke's *Rama*?

Months before, omens like birds in strange numbers and configurations, fierce monsters becoming tame and lying down with friendly ones, comets and falling stars, or three people stumbling and accidentally cutting their own heads off in the same day, start to occur and grow more and more common and improbable. A couple days before, a great storm comes up on the sea, accompanied by odd meteorological phenomena like seven water spouts standing almost motionless before a cliff, lights like the aurora borealis dancing around steeples, sun beams breaking the cloud cover in the middle of the night, and so forth. Prophets have dreams of strange red-faced monsters and cats with human eyes. All anybody can figure out is something big, something important, and something alien is coming from far, far away.

Then, far offshore, a giant vessel is spotted. Miles long. The sails are strangely configured, and the way they move and catch the light makes them look like they're made of glass spun into gossamer. The body of the ship is dark and hunkering as if made of mahogany, and elaborately carved or shaped. Tiger-striped whales the size of galleons with manes and extra eyes on their tail sport around it like dolphins. Moving parallel to the coast at a good pace, it will be within known waters for about a week. Catching it is difficult, generally serendipitous (a small ship accidentally happens to cross its prow) or magical (a sailing vessel propelled by a magical wind, *wind walkers*, pegasus-riders, etc).

Getting on is the first trick. There are spurs and whorls, but no deck, and no visible doors. The convoluted structure is beautiful, but unlike any known form of vessel. Surfaces reflect like sudden mirrors, structures change shape when not closely watched, odd humming and music is heard. If they do manage to breach the hull or otherwise gain ingress, the strangeness is only started. Rat- and cat-faced demons. Blue skinned giants, crawling things with a thousand heads.

Even worse, the first night there is a huge shudder. A huge sound, which would be beautiful music if it wasn't so painful. A rainbow of lights. And even if they find their way back out of the vessel, they are no longer home. The ship has started the long journey again, between worlds. It is nowhere and everywhere, and will not make port again for more than a year.

JRM

03-26-2009 06:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10152857)

Rakshasa

Are we at the Rs already? This book really is front-loaded. In fact, I'd guess we're about three quarters through by now. The beautiful dream is almost over. (sniff)

Anyway, I do love the Rakshasa, even if as a Ravenloft beastie I have to officially look down my nose at it. Diterlizzi really outdid himself on the art, for one thing - the picture for this entry is easily one of the top 10 in the book. But I think the designers also did a good job by playing up the folk-tale/mythological aspects of the creature - from the backwards-curving hands to the way a new generation is produced every century to replace the dead. And let's face it - it's also unusual to have a creature from Hindu mythology in the MM. I can't think of many others offhand. In itself that makes the creature stand out.

Ravenloft beastie?! I always think of their appearance in the 1E AD&D Monster Manual myself.

Sadly, I haven't used the Rakshasa much although they make great central villains and schemers behind the throne. I do like Eskemp's Rakshasa empire idea.

Anyhow, from my limited experience with rakshasa's many parties find it nigh-impossible to damage them since they require high-magic or prepped blessed quarrels to kill. As a result (and I've experienced this myself) encounters with a rakshasa often go "meet a phoney-friendly PC, realize it's a rakshasa and you can't harm it, run away, prepare lots of blessed crossbow bolts, come back and kill it with the first hit".

Now there is a blog somewhere on the wizards website where the staff play through a 3E campaign in which they have an encounter with an "old hermit" in a jungle temple which basically went just like this, which got me thinking "why would a rakshasa stick around to be shih-kebabled" which got my evil DM's brain turning, what if a rakshasa wants the PCs to come back armed for tiger-demon?

Imagine if you will, the party encounter an ancient hermit in a jungle temple, who acts so suspicious one of them casts an illusion-penetrating spell and realizes he's a rakshasa. So they run off and spend the night prepping all those blessed crossbow bolts and return to bushwack the hermit. As they're standing over his corpse congratulating themselves a delegation from the local villages arrives. They are a bit put out to find out that a rakshasa has fooled some adventurers into murdering their holy man, who had just returned that morning from a trip to the capital. :)

EDIT: As for the 'killed by a blessed crossbow bolt' story, I half-suspect it has some root from before the Kolchak episode referred to. There are Indian legends of various heroes defeating/slaying rakshasas with their fantastic archery skills, but (a) as far as I know they don't say that's the best way of killing a rakshasa, just that archery was the hero in question's best combat skill, and (b) I can only remember bow & arrows being used, not crossbows & bolts. Maybe that's what gave the writers of Kolchak: Night Stalker the idea? Assuming it's not just a variant on the old "stake through a vampire's heart" trick.

demiurge1138

03-26-2009 07:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10155166)

Imagine if you will, the party encounter an ancient hermit in a jungle temple, who acts so suspicious one of them casts an illusion-penetrating spell and realizes he's a rakshasa. So they run off and spend the night prepping all those blessed crossbow bolts and return to bushwack the hermit. As they're standing over his corpse congratulating themselves a delegation from the local villages arrives. They are a bit put out to find out that a rakshasa has fooled some adventurers into murdering their holy man, who had just returned that morning from a trip to the capital. :)

On a similar note, a Dragon Magazine article in the late 3.0 days had monstrous cultist classes, for villains who wanted to turn themselves into approximations of the monsters they served/worshiped/emulated. The rakshasa-themed class did something similar--not only did those taking the class more and more resemble a rakshasa, but they had the supernatural ability to attract ranged weapons like a magnet. Whether they wanted to or not.

Thane of Fife

03-26-2009 09:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

While I've never used a Rakshasa in a game of AD&D, my fondest memory of one was from a game of How to Host a Dungeon, where a rakshasa settled under a city and proceeded to attack the city and take their treasure every single turn. Since rakshasa grow more powerful as they acquire more treasure in that game, and the city was constantly being sent more treasure, I very quickly ended up with an unkillable rakshasa, feeding off of the city over its head.

Naxuul

03-26-2009 10:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I find it odd how the 2nd ed description of Rakshasa listed several types of animals they could look like and suggested tigers and gorillas as the most common, but ever since then they have been cat people. Plus the multi-headed noble rakshasa completely disappear. Actually I notice the snake tailed noble lamia went away too.

-Naxuul

Mikaze

03-26-2009 10:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

To this day it's the rakshasa's backwards bending fingers that get to me the most.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Naxuul (Post 10156235)

I find it odd how the 2nd ed description of Rakshasa listed several types of animals they could look like and suggested tigers and gorillas as the most common, but ever since then they have been cat people. Plus the multi-headed noble rakshasa completely disappear. Actually I notice the snake tailed noble lamia went away too.

-Naxuul

Paizo brought all that back to 3.x in their first two Pathfinder APs IIRC. Lamia Matriarchs and Rakshasa Maharajas I believe, along with non-tiger headed rakshasas. A number of other lamia types were put forth too, but some of them stepped out of the bounds of what you might expect from lamia/s/e/ii/seses.

HaplessVictim

03-26-2009 11:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I always loved the Rakshasas, too, but was never quite sure what to do with them. As an earlier poster mentioned, they're this strange grab-bag of spells, weaknesses and strengths which made them hard to DM well. They also had this Kzin-like feel that put me off for some reason.

The blessed crossbow bolt instakill felt like the kernel of a great idea, but not quite a good one on its own, if you know what I mean. If I were to redesign the rakshasa, I'd make the weakness something more in tune with their overall concept. Since they "savor fresh human meat," perhaps eating the flesh of a truly good human kills them.

DMH

03-26-2009 09:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10153334)

There was an article way back when in Dragon (#84, "Never the same thing twice") where the author sort of scratched his head at the weirdness

He must have never watched Kolchak since some of the creature's abilities and the blessed bolt weakness are straight from one episode.

noisms

03-26-2009 09:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 10156548)

I always loved the Rakshasas, too, but was never quite sure what to do with them. As an earlier poster mentioned, they're this strange grab-bag of spells, weaknesses and strengths which made them hard to DM well. They also had this Kzin-like feel that put me off for some reason.

The blessed crossbow bolt instakill felt like the kernel of a great idea, but not quite a good one on its own, if you know what I mean. If I were to redesign the rakshasa, I'd make the weakness something more in tune with their overall concept. Since they "savor fresh human meat," perhaps eating the flesh of a truly good human kills them.

That has quite a nice mythological feel to it. "Only the flesh of a pure human heart can slay a rakshasa," or something.

Sleeper

03-26-2009 10:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10157865)

That has quite a nice mythological feel to it. "Only the flesh of a pure human heart can slay a rakshasa," or something.

And it gives you the perfect opportunity to create an exception-based subsystem for force-feeding an anthropomorphic tiger a human heart during combat. A percentile chance the rakshasa roars (and opens its mouth) randomly or when baited, forcing a jaw open using bend bars/lift gates, a list of custom mechanical benefits from various spells (like *Tasha's Uncontrollable Hideous Laughter*), special odds depending on whether it's roaring or biting, supplemental wrestling rules, and a special grenade-like scatter table for hearts that miss.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10156318)

Paizo brought all that back to 3.x in their first two Pathfinder APs IIRC. Lamia Matriarchs and Rakshasa Maharajas I believe, along with non-tiger headed rakshasas.

The rakshasa adventure featured two tiger-headed rakshasas, a fox-headed one, and one each of boar, lizard, vulture and orangutan-headed.

noisms

03-27-2009 11:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Rat

A welcome reappearance of the 'explaining what common animals look like' trope: rats, we are told, are "long-tailed rodents 5-12 inches long." Well that's put that one to bed, then. I was slightly unclear about rats' appearance, and sometimes confused them with six-legged winged insects 6-8 feet long.

Anyway. Rats function as a swarm, with a single hit dice for many creatures - anyone who thought 4e was being innovative with its swarm monsters, I say to you Tcha! And pah! ;) Once hit points have run out, the swarm is deemed to have dissipated and its constituents fled.

There are a few sub-varieties:

Brush Rat

This 'pack rat' sometimes steals small items of jewelry etc., and can be trained. Suddenly I'm imagining a thief with a trained brush rat who uses it to get into small spaces and grab somebody or other's magic ring. Sounds like something from Al Qadim, somehow.

Giant Rat

These can infect with deadly diseases (5% chance per bite), like their smaller cousins. They hang out in grave yards and crypts, and "cheat ghouls of their prizes" by eating all the corpses.

Osquip

A large rodent with six, eight or ten legs, which burrow around underground and attack trespassers unthinkingly. They can be trained by wizards and Jermlaines, I suppose as guard dogs, though again, it would be an interesting thief's trick to train an Osquip to tunnel right underneath a castle's walls so that its owner could sneak in. Or, alternatively, a sieging army with its special Osquip handler platoon?

demiurge1138

03-27-2009 12:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Are osquips explicitly based on some Barsoomian creature, or are they just similar in their hexapodal anatomy?

Thane of Fife

03-27-2009 12:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

What always irritated me about the Rat entry was the bit about serious diseases - it mentions them - it even gives a percentage chance of contacting one, but there's no hint as to what qualifies as a serious disease, or how one works. Maybe if there'd been some list of generic diseases somewhere....

noisms

03-27-2009 03:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10161357)

What always irritated me about the Rat entry was the bit about serious diseases - it mentions them - it even gives a percentage chance of contacting one, but there's no hint as to what qualifies as a serious disease, or how one works. Maybe if there'd been some list of generic diseases somewhere....

One thing the 2nd edition DMG was really lacking - proper lists of poisons and diseases. Maybe diseases could be imported from Warhammer FRP; it has plenty.

Sleeper

03-27-2009 06:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10161241)

Giant Rat

These can infect with deadly diseases (5% chance per bite), like their smaller cousins. They hang out in grave yards and crypts, and "cheat ghouls of their prizes" by eating all the corpses.

That's an interesting twist. All of a sudden rats... are useful. At least to the living. Want to prevent the scourge of rapidly-spreading undead? Bring in the rats. Have them eat all the corpses. Epidemic quelled.

I rather like that. It's quite a twist on the standard "eek, I'm being attacked by a rodent of unusual size!"

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10161982)

One thing the 2nd edition DMG was really lacking - proper lists of poisons and diseases. Maybe diseases could be imported from Warhammer FRP; it has plenty.

Or the 1st edition DMG. Editing for consistency wasn't one of the *Monstrous Manual's* strong points.

Mikaze

03-27-2009 06:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I have to admit, most of my memories of Osquips come from the Menzoberranzan computer game. God, those teeth...

JRM

03-27-2009 06:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10161345)

Are osquips explicitly based on some Barsoomian creature, or are they just similar in their hexapodal anatomy?

Didn't the osquip first appeared in White Dwarf's Fiend Factory? I think I have that issue somewhere, and I think it mentioned something about it being inspired by ERB's Mars book.

Still, regardless of any authorial extent they certainly do have a strong resemblance to the Barsoomian rat, the Ulsio, a many-legged burrowing rodent that's normally the size of a small dog, although **giant versions the size of a cougar exist**. Oh, and they're the favoured prey of the **Kaldanes**, believe it or not.

JRM

03-27-2009 07:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10161241)

Rat

A welcome reappearance of the 'explaining what common animals look like' trope: rats, we are told, are "long-tailed rodents 5-12 inches long." Well that's put that one to bed, then. I was slightly unclear about rats' appearance, and sometimes confused them with six-legged winged insects 6-8 feet long.

I'm a bit puzzled by the rat entry saying black rats can't swim and brown rats can't climb. They certainly can,

although arguably not as well as their counterparts.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10161241)
Osquip

A large rodent with six, eight or ten legs, which burrow around underground and attack trespassers unthinkingly. They can be trained by wizards and Jermlaines, I suppose as guard dogs, though again, it would be an interesting thief's trick to train an Osquip to tunnel right underneath a castle's walls so that its owner could sneak in. Or, alternatively, a sieging army with its special Osquip handler platoon?

Hmm... the tunnel would probably be too small for a human, so I'm thinking a halfling or gnome sneak-thief with a pack of trained rodents. A gnome makes more sense, considering their affinity for burrowing animals in AD&D.

As for the osquip siege team, that's a fine idea. Although there's lots of other burrowing monsters that could do the same job as well or better. "Send in the Umber Hulk mercenaries!" Then again, osquips work for food and a few shiny things, so are probably the cheapest option.

noisms

03-29-2009 10:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Remorhaz

The polar worm, which grows up to 42' long and lurks beneath the snow, waiting for prey... And I've never used one in a game. Not out of choice - just lack of opportunity. This makes me sad.

Remorhaz contain immense sources of heat; when aroused their insides become so hot that their "back protrusions" even glow red. Victims who are swallowed are killed instantly by this, and metals which come into contact with the creature's back will melt. Another example of the weird conflation of biology with fantasy in D&D: we are told that a special substance is secreted inside the Remorhaz' intestines to bring about the heat surge, whereas I wouldn't really have had a problem with the explanation that it's a fantasy creature and it has a hot belly. But each to their own.

Certainly 'thrym' (the heat-producing substance) adds a fun new dimension to Remorhaz slaying, because it can be sold to alchemists for 5-10 gps a flask. Given that there are 10 flasks per hit dice and a Remorhaz could have as many as 14 hit dice, that makes.... quite a nice little side earner. (Especially if you can get a breeding pair plus eggs, which are worth 500 gps each.) However, as is often the case, I can't help feeling that by the time a group of PCs are powerful enough to kill a 14HD Remorhaz, they probably don't need much in the way of gold.

Aside from a wilderness hazard, Remorhaz can be used as guards, as they are trainable. Pet Remorhaz with your polar-clime-residing BBEG, sir? Watch out though - if it gets hungry enough a Remorhaz will happily eat its master.

EmperorSeth

03-29-2009 01:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Remorhaz are like purple worms as monsters that go into the "yeah, when my party hits mid-level, now I can use them!" pile, but by then, not only does the range of monsters increase, but the plot starts to solidify and make it more clear what you'll be facing, and these guys need more story ties. The environment doesn't help; unless you are in a

severely cold climate, they don't have a reason to show up, do they? I only tossed players into a cold environment once. And for hard to explain reasons, they only fought robots. ;)

demiurge1138

03-29-2009 03:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'm a big fan of remorhaz--they're genuinely alien in a way that a lot of mishmash magical beasts aren't in D&D. I sort of wonder if they're also a "crappy plastic toy" monster, like rust monsters and bulettes.

s/LaSH

03-29-2009 06:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10170115)

I'm a big fan of remorhaz--they're genuinely alien in a way that a lot of mishmash magical beasts aren't in D&D. I sort of wonder if they're also a "crappy plastic toy" monster, like rust monsters and bulettes.

That's about my attitude, too. The remorhaz looks cool, acts cool, does something weird, and it's not based on anything mythic (that I know about). It feels like something that could be real in some D&D world, and didn't need help from any crazy wizard (no disrespect to the owlbear, which is another of my faves). It just works.

It needs more love, though. Are there any elemental versions out there for use in other environments? One could have fun with those...

kami2awa

03-29-2009 07:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10140421)

Peasant pudding

A vaguely greyish color and slightly tacky, like wallpaper paste. Dissolves almost anything organic, but slowly. You'd have to set it on your skin for days before it started to burn. Flavorless, but modestly filling and at least somewhat nutritious. Not a full balanced meal but any means, but you won't starve on it, either. Hence, the name. Peasants toss it in a barn with all the organic leavings, from horse and sheep dung to straw and chaff and rotted fruits and vegetables. And in lean times, they can stretch their meals with a little pudding, and make do. Probably saved more lives than cure light wounds.

Sticky Toffee Pudding

Golden brown in colour, the STP leaves a trail of golden syrup everywhere it goes, making it easy to track (this often attracts insects, even giant ones). Its major defence is its adhesive slime, which can entrap weapons and

attackers like a Mimic's glue. It is edible, and delicious (and moist).

Monsieur Meuble

03-29-2009 07:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I have this picture of a caravan of efreet on a trip in the glacial wastelands, traveling on a palanquin of black stone mounted on the back of a pack of rhemoraz, continually prodded and excited to generate a comfortable heat to the fiery traveler. I don't know what to do about it, except as a very unusual encounter. Are they on a tourist trip on the material plane and friendly enough to take hitchhikers aboard ? Merchant in rare stuff headed to the next ice-giants fort to sell them What They Asked Last Time ? Exiled nobles from the City of Brass trying to regain their place and honor by melting the poles ?

As for the thrym, you know who would be very interested and would pay very high prices and favors to PCs to own some ? All the submarine intelligent species. What we have here is essentially thermite, flameless ardent fire able to burn without air even in the stellar void or underwater, and so of invaluable use for any aboleth, black dragon, crabmen, dolphin, dragon turtle, nereid, aquatic elf, kaolinh, kapoacinh, reef giant, storm giant, sea hag, ixitxachitl, kraken, kuo-toa, lacedon, leviathan (and other kind of whales), locatah, merman, merrow, morkhot, water naga, sahuagin, selkie, sirine, sea sprite or vodyanoi eager to melt something, do a bit of metalsmithing or heat-kill something. Or even a lich who installed himself at the bottom of the ocean, need to buil some artifact but can't be arsed to go back to the surface to do so...

Hey, seeing all the civilizations living under water, you could easily imagine a "gold rush" on rhemorazes, would the existence of the thrym be known down there. A mercenary gold-rush, seeing as how they can't go hunt the beasties themselves. Soe tired to send an expedition, but something about a bunch of dudes drenched in water exploring glacial wastelands didn't go well...

Sleeper

03-29-2009 08:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

One thing I really like about the remorhaz is their metabolism. Most cold-weather monsters are white. Winter wolves, yeti, white dragons, etc. Makes sense. Most of them are immune, or occasionally resistant, to cold. Okay, though immunity should be considerably rarer. Nearly every single one also has a natural weapon based on cold. Cold breath, cold touch, whatever. Which their primary rivals and prey are mostly immune to. Makes no sense. The remorhaz's inner furnace is a great way for a creature not *made* of ice and snow to stay warm, and it's a great deterrent. Particularly before 2E beefed up of dragons and giants, 10d10 damage was terribly impressive.

JRM

03-29-2009 10:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10169204)

Remorhaz

The polar worm, which grows up to 42' long and lurks beneath the snow, waiting for prey... And I've never used one in a game. Not out of choice - just lack of opportunity. This makes me sad.

I've used one once, and met one once while playing. I'd have liked to use them more often since I think they're cool (or should that be hot?) monsters, but I just didn't run many polar adventures.

If I remember correctly, in 1st edition AD&D remorhaz's were more intelligent than humans (Very- or High-), which would expand their game possibilities considerably since they become more than just brutes that want to eat you, but can scheme and negotiate to become Masters of the Ice.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10169204)

Remorhaz contain immense sources of heat; when aroused their insides become so hot that their "back protrusions" even glow red. Victims who are swallowed are killed instantly by this, and metals which come into contact with the creature's back will melt. Another example of the weird conflation of biology with fantasy in D&D: we are told that a special substance is secreted inside the Remorhaz' intestines to bring about the heat surge, whereas I wouldn't really have had a problem with the explanation that it's a fantasy creature and it has a hot belly. But each to their own.

Well my tastes are quite different, I've always had trouble with the remorhaz's heat-generating ability from a biological/physical basis, it raises all kinds of questions:

Firstly, if a remorhaz can heat parts of itself to a temperature *that melts steel on contact*, why isn't the dang thing resistant or immune to fire attacks?

Secondly, just think of how much energy it would take to generate that much heat. Where does the remorhaz get it from? If it gets it from the meat it eats it would have to either eat scores of walruses every day to meet its calorie requirements or have a supernaturally efficient metabolism.

Thirdly, if it's at steel-melting temperatures it would cause heat damage out to a considerable radius, and will soon be paddling around in a glacier pool of its own. Instead, the remorhaz only damages on contact.

My conclusion/solution was straight-forward, a remorhaz does not produce heat. It creates a transmutation effect that causes objects that touch its back or enter its gullet to melt, similar to how a bulette sweats a "rock to mud" oil to burrow through the ground (at least, that's what the Ecology of the Bulette says), or the way a pyrolisk can turn a victim to ashes if they fail their save versus.

Thus, 'thrym' is the remorhaz's 'melting juice', so to speak. Rather than being some kind of super-fuel, it's a magical substance that creates a heat-style transmutation without the necessary thermal energy change (so a sword goes from a sharp piece of metal to a puddle without needing to become white-hot), which explain its value in creating heat-related magic items.

Quote:

Aside from a wilderness hazard, Remorhaz can be used as guards, as they are trainable. Pet Remorhaz with your polar-clime-residing BBEG, sir? Watch out though - if it gets hungry enough a Remorhaz will happily eat its master.

I prefer the idea of the remorhaz as being the main monster rather than a minion, but then (a) I usually run lower level campaigns and (b) I prefer the original intelligent version of the polar worm.

Maybe the PCs are tasked with destroying a tribe of snow goblins who have been kidnapping folk & stealing cattle to placate a remorhaz they worship? Or, they have a nasty magical item they want to dispose of (say, a CE sword of berserking), and the 'easy' way to do this is to find a remorhaz and throw it upon its red-hot back.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by kami2awa (Post 10170547)
Sticky Toffee Pudding

Golden brown in colour, the STP leaves a trail of golden syrup everywhere it goes, making it easy to track (this often attracts insects, even giant ones). Its major defence is its adhesive slime, which can entrap weapons and attackers like a Mimic's glue. It is edible, and delicious (and moist).

We're still doing puddings? Great!

Anyway, the remorhaz has inspired me to add two more to the list:

Runny Pudding

This much-feared type of the deadly pudding has the power to turn any solid it comes in contact with into liquid, except for stone, adamantium and a few other rare substances. Any creature struck by a runny pudding must save versus breath weapon or die, their body melting into a puddle of goo the pudding quickly slurps up. Weapons that strike the pudding often melt before they can do any damage. Even worse, a runny pudding is one of the fastest known species of pudding, moving at 12".

Ice Pudding

This pudding is virtually indistinguishable from its relative the white pudding, but more dangerous. The ice pudding radiates supernatural cold, weapons that strike it must save or be shattered on impact and its attacks add terrible cold damage that can freeze its victims solid for the few rounds it takes to devour them. Ice puddings take double damage from fire attacks, but are immune to cold.

EDIT: And here's another one I just thought of.

Savoury Pudding

This pudding comes in a variety of colours, from mottled gray to a rich chocolate brown. It is slow-moving and does little damage with its attacks, but compensates for this by producing an extraordinary perfume that combines all the pleasant scents that a person can imagine. Any living creature that smells a savoury pudding must save versus spells or be drawn to seek the source of the wonderful odour in a similar fashion to how a harpy's song attracts creatures who hear it. Once they reach the savoury pudding, they will be compelled to taste it, whereupon they must make a second save versus spells or be mesmerized by its amazing flavour, which renders them unable to act for 2-12 rounds. They will barely notice that the pudding is using this time to eat them alive.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

with regards to the Polar Wyrms, didn't it originate from one of those early in the timeline Conan pastiches?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10170932)

If I remember correctly, in 1st edition AD&D remorhaz's were more intelligent than humans (Very- or High-), which would expand their game possibilities considerably since they become more than just brutes that want to eat you, but can scheme and negotiate to become Masters of the Ice.

My first exposure to the remorhaz was *G2: Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl*, and it was definitely a dumb creature. Checking the 1E MM, they were smart for bugs, but still listed as "animal". I prefer them unintelligent. There are too many inexplicably sapient beasts out there.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10170932)

Firstly, if a remorhaz can heat parts of itself to a temperature that melts steel on contact, why isn't the dang thing resistant or immune to fire attacks?

Secondly, just think of how much energy it would take to generate that much heat. Where does the remorhaz get it from? If it gets it from the meat it eats it would have to either eat scores of walruses every day to meet its calorie requirements or have a supernaturally efficient metabolism.

Thirdly, if it's at steel-melting temperatures it would cause heat damage out to a considerable radius, and will soon be paddling around in a glacier pool of its own. Instead, the remorhaz only damages on contact.

I'd have a problem with that. We have acid in our stomach; does that mean we're immune to acid? There is no reason whatsoever why a dragon capable of breathing fire should also be *immune* to fire. Or even particularly resistant, beyond the whole thick armored skin thing. Evolution is lazy; all that's needed is a cast-iron gastrointestinal system and an asbestos mouth and throat. The rest is still flesh. (I have no problem with dragons being immune to fire if they're elemental creatures *of* fire, but the more Western types shouldn't be lava-divers. Plus, it's a lot more fun if grappling dragons have to worry about the other dragon [breathing fire on their head](#).)

Same with a remorhaz. Just developing a spectacular offensive capability doesn't mean your entire body is going to be immune to it. In fact, it makes more sense if the body only develops the minimum protections necessary. Such an effective weapon can even be somewhat dangerous to the creature; Discworld's exploding dragons parody this concept. In this case, all that's needed is a slightly heat-resistant gut, and some kind of thermal insulator between the heat vanes and the rest of the body.

If I use an acetylene torch in the arctic, am I in immediate peril of dying from the backwash of heat? What about keeping an outpost at 68 degrees F? Does that mean the station is doomed to melt through hundreds of feet of ice and plunge into the water? Of course not. You're assuming the creature is continually radiating a massive amount of energy indiscriminately. The intestines only get hot when the creature is attacking or defending, and the only part that develops truly intensive heat are specific protrusions on the back. So the radiant energy is only generated in a crisis, is limited to very short bursts, goes mostly up, and any spillover is blocked by the creature's body from affecting the ground. The lair of a remorhaz that is forced to occasionally defend itself might have a rough floor and a slick, smooth ceiling where the ice has melted and frozen back over. This could actually structurally reinforce the ceiling, by creating a more perfect arch and replacing packed snow or old ice with a new, hard shell.

The energy issue may be valid, but you're still overstating the case. A spot-source of intense heat doesn't have to throw as much energy as a larger heat source. Sparklers can be hotter than the melting point of steel and certainly cause bad burns on contact, but won't flash-fry any bystanders. They generate vastly less energy than say an oven. In any case, this is a world with fire-breathing dragons, hexapodal lizards, and 100-ton creatures

that can fly with ordinary wings. To start to be aerodynamically plausible even a pegasus would require a more than 100 foot wingspan, cartoonishly huge muscles, and a direct line constantly pumping pure processed sugar into its stomach to even have a chance of flying. Suspension of disbelief is very personal and arbitrary, but this is a strange place to draw the line.

Inyssius

03-30-2009 04:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Very well said, Sleeper. As always.

Personally, the Remorhaz has always been high on my list of monsters I'd like to use someday. They have a very, I don't know, *mythical* quality about them; they're the sort of thing I would totally expect you to find in a Conan story, or a story about Hercules. Or a Norse myth. They're something that just *happens*, that might eat you if you're out on the tundra, that might have eaten a great hero once long ago or a whole caravan just last month. A primal force; not in the FEEL THE WRATH OF GAIA sense, but just "Nature, red in tooth and claw."

I have no doubt that the polar wyrm owes this elevated stature in my mind to its picture in the 3.5 Monster Manual, which is really very evocative indeed:

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/MM...M35_PG214b.jpg

In this particular vein, I would rank it one above the 3.5 *Fiend Folio*'s Ahuizotl, two below the Myconid race, and one below the Yellow Musk Creeper. I've always really wanted to run a campaign drawing heavily on that theme.

Sleeper

03-30-2009 05:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Just to do something that doesn't make biological sense....

Digging back in time, there were some huge arthropods. *Jaekelopterus* was an 8-foot long lobster-like scorpion that lived in lakes, and *Arthropleura* was a millipede about the same size that lurked in swamps and left tracks that resemble those left by a tractor with caterpillar treads. These huge bugs vanished when terrestrial vertebrates started to appear.

What if they went north? In the dark chills seas under the ice shelves, giant lobsters and crabs and sea scorpions survived and thrived. Burrowing under permafrost in the tundra, lurking amongst the pines and firs of the tiaga, scuttling across the perpetual ice and snow that is like a skin or skum over the northern seas, and dancing in front of the auroras that light the seasons-long midnight, the gigantic millipedes, dragonflies and mites spread and diversified.

Their distant descendants form a whole ecology in the icy wastes. Slumbering and passive, the mayfly-like varieties burst into vigorous life during the brief summer heat and then quickly die. When the long cold season starts again, their eggs buried under the soil wait as long as is necessary for the next melting. Further north, the creatures mostly slumber. Hiding, buried under the snow and ice, they preseve their energy. Half-frozen in an almost cryogenic suspension, they wait until the tremor of feet or paws disturb their rest. Under the ice, in the water which always remains unfrozen but dark, they lurk and hide. Hanging from the bottom of the ice shelves like a barnacle infestation, or swimming languidly through the waters.

The Snow Queen was my favorite fairy tale as a child. Perhaps the Snow Queen, in her great sleigh, with her castles of ice and mirrors that shatter and worm into hearts, is just a facade. Underneath the perfect pale white skin is something alien. An larval insect, which has learned to disguise itself with snow and ice and excreted substances to resemble the

creatures of the Warmlands. Her guards appear to be glass and ice, but are distant kin of the mantises, with sword-arms and carapaces. Their shells are clear, and the high refractive index makes them glitter as if they were knights made of diamond.

The mirrors are not ice, but the chrysalises of another of her servitors. Covered with a mirror-like substance, they cluster in low-lying depressions in the ice, forming great masses. The parent smooths and rubs these masses until the surface forms an almost perfectly smooth mirror. Yet if you look closely, you can see what look almost like hairline cracks, outlining each of the separate chrysalises. Once complete, these chrysalis-mirrors can be removed. The mass has formed a smooth mirror with an irregular border on the top, while the underside is a chaotic but still largely reflective mass. She mounts them around her palace.

If these mirrors are exposed to warmth, say an ambassador from the elven nation of the spruces, a pupa might wake. Or if struck hard enough, they can fragment. The pods are sharp, and can draw blood. If the larval insect inside senses warmth, they burrow out and burrow into their new host, infesting it. This feels like a pin-prick, or cutting a finger on glass, and is usually not regarded as anything worth noting. Months later, as the parasite starts to reach maturity, the host is driven by some primal urge to seek out the barren lands of ice.

The Queen's servants patrol her borders, alert for such souls pressing further and further into her lands. They take these seekers in their chitinous sleighs, pulled by the great remorhaz, back to her seemingly empty city. They rest as honored guests, and in a few nights the insect is born, violently, from the flesh of its host. She speaks and whispers and greets the newborn insects, and hears from them news and stories of the southern lands. Some of her subjects are woken from their stasis to celebrate the new birth, and the newborn's castoff flesh is devoured at the banquet.

YojimboC

03-30-2009 06:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Am I seriously the only person here who has used a remorhaz in a game?

I love polar adventures. I love vikings and frost giants and castles of ice and all that shit, so I throw them at my players from time to time. I haven't used a remorhaz in some time, actually, but I did back in 2E. And since we were teenagers and total munchkins (the party had, like, three Hammers of Thunderbolts) the remorhaz went down like a bitch. But I did (and do) like the idea of a gigantic arctic centipede. Regrettably, the last time I did a frost giant adventure, I'd forgotten about them. Wish I hadn't.

JRM

03-30-2009 06:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10171700)

with regards to the Polar Wyrms, didn't it originate from one of those early in the timeline Conan pastiches?

In a word, no. The story you were thinking of was The Lair of the Ice Worm, where the titular menace radiated extreme cold, not heat. There are some fantasy stories which feature a similar cold-radiating worm called a remora, not to be confused with the fish of the same name, which has different mythical abilities associated with it (namely the ability to fasten on ships and drag them to a halt).

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10171715)

My first exposure to the remorhaz was G2: Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl, and it was definitely a dumb creature. Checking the 1E MM, they were smart for bugs, but still listed as "animal". I prefer them unintelligent. There are too many inexplicably sapient beasts out there.

They're animal-intelligence in 1E as well? I must have misremembered.

As to your other points, I'm reluctant to get into an argument about it but I think you're overstating the case the other way. (e.g. the acid in our stomachs isn't strong enough to dissolve steel in seconds, nor does it ooze out of our backs, it's more than a 'slightly heat resistant gut' it's back is **hot enough to melt steel in seconds** - how many thousands of degrees centigrade would it have to be to do that? - and that is meant to be excess heat from its interior. An acetylene torch may take a minute or so to melt a sword, the remorhaz is that hot along its entire back - say a strip thirty feet long and a few feet wide rather than the fraction of an inch that the hot point of the torch covers. I don't know where you get the idea it's a momentary spot source from. The MM description says its the remorhaz's whole guts & backs are that hot for the duration of combat (in minute-long AD&D rounds, remember!), and after the fight's over that heat all has to go *somewhere*). As for the sparkler comparison, that's basically my third problem - if its hot enough to melt steel with a momentary contact it probably is hot enough to flash-fry anybody in the immediate vicinity.)

Besides which, it was the 'where is it getting the energy from' question that was bothering me the most.

So, I hope you can understand why my particular suspension of disbelief doesn't suspend that far, and I basically decided "it isn't really heat, it's magic!" :D

Monsieur Meuble

03-30-2009 07:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10172410)

Besides which, it was the 'where is it getting the energy from' question that was bothering me the most.

You see those wings ? on a burrowing animal ? They, of course, are not wings, except aesthetically. They are highly efficient heat converters. They absorb the ambient heat and stock it in a chemical form. And "heat" must be understood broadly in a fantasy world : physical particle movement "heat", solar energy and magical potential.

Rhemorazes do not install themselves in frozen wastelands : frozen wastelands install themselves around rhemorazes. They absorb that much heat. Also, why your typical frozen wasteland-dweller is from a viking-type civilization of barbarian-fighter churning out magic tricks : rhemorazes absorb such a quantity of thaum as to make the spontaneous discovery of magic a very rare occurrence, and so the civ' develops very few magic-users.

Also : Teleport a rhemoraz in a really warmer climate and it wil overload and die. Cast a "fire invulnerability"

spell, teleport him in the desert and he will accumulate and concentrate enough heat to melt the Earth crust. With an anti-overloading spell duration long enough, it will then absorb heat from the mantle and below and can probably melt its way to the center of the world and freeze it cold.

Sleeper

03-30-2009 07:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10172410)

*As to your other points, I'm reluctant to get into an argument about it but I think you're overstating the case the other way. (e.g. the acid in our stomachs isn't strong enough to dissolve steel in seconds, nor does it ooze out of our backs, it's more than a 'slightly heat resistant gut' it's back is **hot enough to melt steel in seconds** - how many thousands of degrees centigrade would it have to be to do that? - and that is meant to be excess heat from its interior. An acetylene torch may take a minute or so to melt a sword, the remorhaz is that hot along its entire back - say a strip thirty feet long and a few feet wide rather than the fraction of an inch that the hot point of the torch covers. I don't know where you get the idea it's a momentary spot source from. The MM description says its the remorhaz's whole guts & backs are that hot for the duration of combat (in minute-long AD&D rounds, remember!), and after the fight's over that heat all has to go somewhere). As for the sparkler comparison, that's basically my thir problem - if its hot enough to melt steel with a momentary contact it probably is hot enough to flash-fry anybody in the immediate vicinity.)*

Besides which, it was the 'where is it getting the energy from' question that was bothering me the most.

So, I hope you can understand why my particular suspension of disbelief doesn't suspend that far, and I basically decided "it isn't really heat, it's magic!":D

Steel melts at about 2400 degrees F, and vaporizes at about 5400 degrees F which should be sufficient. For brass, knock off 800 and 1500 degrees or so. Rather than a huge hot radiant surface, think of it as a series of heat-conductive veins in a insulating material. The heat from the stomach is concentrated and piped into the veins, and it's those spots (at the tips of the horns, perhaps) which cause severe damage to flesh. That's a lot of heat in a very small area, but not necessarily a godawful amount of energy. After all, there's nothing in the description that says the metal weapons suddenly melt into puddles. A small amount of melting is sufficient to render the weapon useless, particularly when combined with a forceful blow. I tend to think of things like that as a convenient combat simplification, like calling every blow that removes hit points an "injury" or a "wound" instead of a loss of morale or a consequence of being favored by the goddess of luck, or whatever else they actually represent.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10172562)

Rhemorazes do not install themselves in frozen wastelands : frozen wastelands install themselves around rhemorazes. They absorb that much heat.

That kind of logic works wonderfully in a fantasy environment. :)

demiurge1138

03-30-2009 08:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10172282)

Am I seriously the only person here who has used a remorhaz in a game?

I love polar adventures. I love vikings and frost giants and castles of ice and all that shit, so I throw them at my players from time to time. I haven't used a remorhaz in some time, actually, but I did back in 2E. And since we were teenagers and total munchkins (the party had, like, three Hammers of Thunderbolts) the remorhaz went down like a bitch. But I did (and do) like the idea of a gigantic arctic centipede. Regrettably, the last time I did a frost giant adventure, I'd forgotten about them. Wish I hadn't.

Nope, I have, and it sounds like it went much better for the remorhaz in my version. In a one-shot I ran, I used one as a random encounter as the party was trekking across the icy wilderness. They had a packhorse they were using to carry equipment (and were planning on eating it once it froze/starved to death), and a remorhaz burrowed up from beneath them, killed the horse, and started eating it as the party scattered.

Now, the monk and the cleric were both smart enough to stay the hell away from the thing as it was eating their poor exhausted horse. The wizard, on the other hand... he figured "oh, it's a fiery creature, it must be vulnerable to cold!", got its attention by shooting it with cold beams... which didn't do much except attract the remorhaz's attention. One grapple check later and the wizard is an appetizer for the remorhaz, and the monk and cleric run off as it finishes eating their horse.

noisms

03-30-2009 09:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10172562)

Rhemorazes do not install themselves in frozen wastelands : frozen wastelands install themselves around rhemorazes. They absorb that much heat. Also, why your typical frozen wasteland-dweller is from a viking-type civilization of barbarian-fighter churning out magic tricks : rhemorazes absorb such a quantity of thaum as to make the spontaneous discovery of magic a very rare occurrence, and so the civ' develops very few magic-users.

I like the way you think.

MuscaDomestica

03-30-2009 12:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I think another good idea would be a direct portal to the elemental plane of fire, make them part elemental, maybe a probe for explorers/tourists who want to see the arctic.

Sleeper

03-30-2009 01:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MuscaDomestica (Post 10173513)

I think another good idea would be a direct portal to the elemental plane of fire, make them part elemental, maybe probe for explorers/tourists who want to see the arctic.

Or make them elemental *spirits*. Long ago, when the gods first divided the world among their servants, the spirits of fire were given the best parts. The humid and lush jungles, teeming with life, verdant and vibrant. The spirits reveled in their new playground, danced across the sky, and lighted on the branches of the towering trees. And then, they set them on fire. As the branches sparked and flared, they laughed. The monkeys were even funnier with their hair singed off. More and more things burned, until the vast sheltering canopies of leaves were aflame. When the flames died down all was ash. Eden had become a desert.

So the gods punished them. Turned them into the basest of creatures, worms. Gave them a hard shell, so they could not escape. And then threw them high into the sky, where they flew further and further north, finally crashing to the ground.

When they crawled out of their holes, heavy in their new shells and armor, they saw an empty world. All white, stretching to the horizon. Nothing to see. So they went back into their craters, curled up in their shells, and slept. Hoping for a better world tomorrow.

And when they hear something walking above, they surge out to see if they've been forgiven. If the gods have come back, to set them free once again. And when they find out it is not so, that the feet are just those of a bear, or a dwarf, they flare and burn with helpless rage.

The remorhaz is a cage, a prison, a crucible. Inside is a spirit of light and heat, of freedom and fire. That once danced across the skies, and is now doomed to burrow like a worm.

The Last Conformist

03-30-2009 06:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10172252)

Just to do something that doesn't make biological sense....

Digging back in time, there were some huge arthropods. Jaekelopterus was an 8-foot long lobster-like scorpion that lived in lakes, and Arthropleura was a millipede about the same size that lurked in swamps and left tracks that resemble those left by a tractor with caterpillar treads. These huge bugs vanished when terrestrial vertebrates started to appear.

ObNitpick: *Jaekelopterus* was a sea scorpion, not a scorpion.

The name "sea scorpion" is doubly misleading - they're not scorpions and most did not live in the sea - but hallowed by popular-paleontological tradition. Technical texts usually call them eurypterids, which is harder to

pronounce but less confusing.

JRM

03-31-2009 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Oh dear, I seem to have set off a nerve (or should that be a hot vein). :)

Anyhows, I had been wondering where Remorhaz's could get the thermal energy from (assuming it is actual heat and not magical melting as I speculated) and came up with the "conduct to the elemental plane of fire" and the "gather ambient energy" explanations, but I'd not considered that might be an explanation for them living in icy wastes. I like that idea. Other possibilities I came up with was they draw heat from the Sun or the Earth's molten core (although in AD&D those heat sources are possibly natural conducts to Elemental Fire as well), or they have a supernaturally energy-efficient digestion that draws as much power from meat as a nuclear reactor does Uranium.

In any case, it gave me the idea that Remorhaz's heat-generation power might also satisfy their caloric requirements, so they only need to eat to gain the nutrients necessary to build or repair their bodies. There are a fair number of D&D monsters that might have impossibly efficient metabolisms like this.

Another notion I had was that a Remorhaz might have a magical ability to nigh-instantaneously concentrate its self-generated heat at any point in its guts and heat-veins, which could explain why a Remorhaz's back is cherry-red rather than the incandescent white an object hot enough to melt steel in the brief moment it takes to land a blow would likely glow. That would allow the Remorhaz to do the same amount of damage with a lesser amount of heat, although it would still require far more energy than any organic creature that's likely to exist in the real world could generate.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10172582)

Steel melts at about 2400 degrees F, and vaporizes at about 5400 degrees F which should be sufficient. For brass, knock off 800 and 1500 degrees or so.

Quite, if it's just regular thermal energy its back would have to be hotter than most blast furnaces, to melt metal that quickly requires an energy density resembling the hot core of an explosion. That matches the 10-100 damage resulting from contact with a Polar Worm's back. Somehow, the "Worm as written" must contain this heat so it doesn't damage its surroundings, which is part of my initial quibble.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10172582)

Rather than a huge hot radiant surface, think of it as a series of heat-conductive veins in a insulating material. The heat from the stomach is concentrated and piped into the veins, and it's those spots (at the tips of the horns, perhaps) which cause severe damage to flesh. That's a lot of heat in a very small area, but not necessarily a godawful amount of energy

If those spots are close enough together, and hot enough, that a blow anywhere upon the Remorhaz's back will suffer 10-100 damage, I don't see what's the effective difference between the total energy requirements.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10172582)

After all, there's nothing in the description that says the metal weapons suddenly melt into puddles. A small amount of melting is sufficient to render the weapon useless, particularly when combined with a forceful blow. I tend to think of things like that as a convenient combat simplification, like calling every blow that removes hit points an "injury" or a "wound" instead of a loss of morale or a consequence of being favored by the goddess of luck, or whatever else they actually represent.

Yes, I was assuming only part of the weapon melts, and the rest of it warps, softens, bursts into flames or just becomes too hot to handle. After all, if a sword was to entirely turn into molten metal in some fraction of a second, the wielder's hand would likely be burnt off.

Actually, that could be another hint that a Polar Worm may cause magically melting rather than truly heat. There's no mention of the risk of burns from holding a weapon that suddenly suffers 10-100 fire damage.;

Sleeper

03-31-2009 05:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10174245)

ObNitpick: Jaekelopterus was a sea scorpion, not a scorpion.

I know, I know. I really tried, but I just couldn't use the word "sea" when describing a *lake* animal.... :)

ObTangent: Been a long time since the heyday of alt.hack, hasn't it? Time flies...

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10175656)

Oh dear, I seem to have set off a nerve (or should that be a hot vein). :)

How so? It's just a very mild, very temperate discussion. I think the issue of energy transfer is probably going to be a bigger issue than the energy generation requirements or the radiant heat, but I haven't touched that kind of math in ages. The reactive heating is clever solution.

Kakita Kojiro

03-31-2009 09:14 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10175656)

In any case, it gave me the idea that Remorhaz's heat-generation power might also satisfy their caloric requirement: so they only need to eat to gain the nutrients necessary to build or repair their bodies. There are a fair number of D&D monsters that might have impossibly efficient metabolisms like this.

My thoughts on the Remorhaz has always been: what the heck are these things *eating* that requires that much

heat to digest *and* still yields enough energy by digesting it that generating all that heat is energy-efficient?

'Cause if your intestines need to get *that* hot, you're not eating organic matter unless you're also crapping out diamonds. Maybe they're gobbling up rock and calcining it? Their whole set-up seems like it would fit in well with some sort of [alt biochemistry](#).

Actually, they'd've been a good choice for another critter dropped by the crash in the background of "Expedition to the Barrier Peaks", sort of like the Aurumvorax and *its* weird biochemistry.

noisms

03-31-2009 10:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10177274)

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'Cause if your intestines need to get that hot, you're not eating organic matter unless you're also crapping out diamonds. Maybe they're gobbling up rock and calcining it? Their whole set-up seems like it would fit in well with some sort of alt biochemistry.

Actually, they'd've been a good choice for another critter dropped by the crash in the background of "Expedition to the Barrier Peaks", sort of like the Aurumvorax and its weird biochemistry.

Suddenly a better reason for entering a Remorhaz' tunnels - getting all those diamonds that the thing has crapped out.

JRM

03-31-2009 03:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10176377)

How so? It's just a very mild, very temperate discussion. I think the issue of energy transfer is probably going to be a bigger issue than the energy generation requirements or the radiant heat, but I haven't touched that kind of math in ages. The reactive heating is clever solution.

The hot vein quip was just a touch of humour, hence the :).

I've done a back-of-the-envelope calculation, and going by the energy required to melt steel if the heat was uniformly distributed over a Polar Worm's back and guts the total energy requirements would be in the high Megajoule to low Gigajoule range. That's far too much heat for any real-world creature to generate through chemical digestion - it requires about a ton of meat to generate 10MJ of energy.

However, if it only needs enough **total** energy to, say, melt a kilogram of steel, in its entire system and can instantaneously shunt that energy around at will via some kind of magic, then the total energy needed is only

~900kJ (assuming its perfectly efficient, heatloss could drastically increase that), which can be obtained from 90kg of meat.

JRM

03-31-2009 04:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10172562)

Rhemorazes do not install themselves in frozen wastelands : frozen wastelands install themselves around rhemorazes. They absorb that much heat. Also, why your typical frozen wasteland-dweller is from a viking-type civilization of barbarian-fighter churning out magic tricks : rhemorazes absorb such a quantity of thaum as to make the spontaneous discovery of magic a very rare occurrence, and so the civ' develops very few magic-users.

As I said earlier, I like this idea on a magical-symbolic level, you can have a "The Polar Worms have stolen Spring" kind of scenario.

Unfortunately, I don't believe it works on a thermodynamic level, because (a) The sunlight on a 60-mile wide area (a remorhaz's average territory) should be about 1-10 Terawatts, [EDIT: Derived from another back-of-the-envelope calculation based on the Sun's average output. The energy varies depending on the latitude. Another approach is back-figuring from the Stefan-Boltzmann law for black body radiation and the Earth's mean surface temperature of ~288K, which gives an average figure of ~5.7TW for thermal equilibrium over that area.]

assuming Earth-like conditions, which is thousands of times the likely heat requirements of its blast-furnace metabolism; [EDITED EDIT: Of course, if there were hundreds or thousands of Polar Worms in each territory it could explain it.:D] and (b) it would also need to sequester the heat somehow, if it just re-emits that energy most of it will end up back in the local environment and you won't get a frozen wasteland.

Hmm... maybe it converts the energy into *thrym*? And the energy may be small compared to sunlight, but it could be "the straw that tips the balance" to create an iceage.

Personally, I think we'd have to revert to "magic dun it".;)

JRM

03-31-2009 04:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10177447)

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10177274)

My thoughts on the Remorhaz has always been: what the heck are these things eating that requires that much heat to digest and still yields enough energy by digesting it that generating all that heat is energy-efficient?

'Cause if your intestines need to get that hot, you're not eating organic matter unless you're also crapping out diamonds. Maybe they're gobbling up rock and calcining it? Their whole set-up seems like it would fit in well wi some sort of alt biochemistry.

Actually, they'd've been a good choice for another critter dropped by the crash in the background of "Expedition to the Barrier Peaks", sort of like the Aurumvorax and its weird biochemistry.

Suddenly a better reason for entering a Remorhaz' tunnels - getting all those diamonds that the thing has crapped out.

Sorry, but diamonds require a lot of energy to create - they're so tough because of the chemical energy in all those tetrahedral Carbon-Carbon bonds. It would make more sense going the other way and saying the Remorhaz *eats* diamonds, using its super-heat to unlock the calories stored within them.

Sleeper

03-31-2009 09:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10178475)
The hot vein quip was just a touch of humour, hence the :).

So was the "mild, temperate" comment, albeit minus the smiley.

Though I don't think anybody was claiming that a remorhaz stealing spring and pooping diamonds was anything but mythic. :)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10178475)
*However, if it only needs enough **total** energy to, say, melt a kilogram of steel, in its entire system and can instantaneously shunt that energy around at will via some kind of magic, then the total energy needed is only ~900k (assuming its perfectly efficient, heatloss could drastically increase that), which can be obtained from 90kg of meat.*

Sounds pretty good, then. Assuming the heat is normally stored in an organ in the gut, and veins lead to the surface of the of the horns, the remorhaz can transfer the heat in response to minute vibrations or some other physical cue. Perhaps when the creature is angry, the channels partially open, explaining the glowing red back. Sort of warming the engine, as it were. If this spillover is mostly in the visible and not IR range, then there would be minimal energy loss. Requires very efficient biological insulators and conductors and some kind of tactile sense that doesn't get fried by the proximity to the heat, but we can handwave that.

JRM

03-31-2009 10:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10179225)

Sounds pretty good, then. Assuming the heat is normally stored in an organ in the gut, and veins lead to the surface of the of the horns, the remorhaz can transfer the heat in response to minute vibrations or some other physical cue. Perhaps when the creature is angry, the channels partially open, explaining the glowing red back. Sort of warming the engine, as it were.

Yes, it puts us within plausible energy levels. The Remorhaz could still be losing a lot of heat while it's back is red-hot, even if it minimizes convection and conduction losses. Say, its back is at 800 degrees Kelvin (~526C, as hot as a low-burning blacksmith's forge, just enough to glow red & soften iron or steel) and the radiating surfaces add up to 3 square metres (assumes the protrusions on its back add up to about a foot wide and thirty feet long), the Stefan-Boltzmann black body law says it will radiate a total of 70 Kilowatts.

That seems about right to me, it would be like the Polar Worm having a row of electric heaters down its back - uncomfortably warm to anyone close to it, but nowhere near blast-furnace heat. (If it was continuously hot enough to melt steel on contact it would need to be at 2500 degrees Kelvin+, and would be radiating energy a hundred times as fast if not more - 7+ Megawatts of heat!)

That's still the caloric content of 7kgs of meat per second though, or 420 kg per minute, so it will want to keep its heat use to a minimum. Although we could say it 'pulses' its heat (A hundred one-millisecond pulses per second would look the same but require a tenth of the energy), or the emission area is actually less than that, or just use one of those AD&D variants with 10-second melee rounds.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10179225)

If this spillover is mostly in the visible and not IR range, then there would be minimal energy loss. Requires very efficient biological insulators and conductors and some kind of tactile sense that doesn't get fried by the proximity to the heat, but we can handwave that.

Why minimal energy loss for visible thermal energy as opposed to IR? A joule of photonic energy is a joule of energy, regardless of the wavelength. Furthermore, a black-body radiates thermal energy to the fourth power of the temperature, so an object that visibly glows red-hot (at, say 800+ degrees Kelvin) object will radiate roughly fifty times the energy of a room temperature object at 300 degrees Kelvin, all things being equal ($8^4/3^4 \approx 50$).

One idea I had is that the 'Remorhaz's red glow' isn't black-body but is concentrated in the visible spectrum, kind of like a fluorescent tube, so is "more light than heat", is that the sort of thing you're talking about?

Kakita Kojiro

03-31-2009 10:57 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10178535)

Sorry, but diamonds require a lot of energy to create - they're so tough because of the chemical energy in all those tetrahedral Carbon-Carbon bonds. It would make more sense going the other way and saying the Remorhaz eats diamonds, using its super-heat to unlock the calories stored within them.

I'm actually a chemical engineer, so I did in fact realize that. It was an example of using hyperbole to point out the ridiculousness of the situation... a time-honored Internets tradition.

Appropriate that some pedant pointed out the factual error, *also* a time-honored Internet tradition. :p:D

noisms

03-31-2009 11:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Revenant

Where do Revenants originally come from? I seem to remember reading a short story in one of those *Dragonlance* compilations a long, long time ago (*Kender, Gullydwarves and Gnomes*, maybe?) in which the main character was one - although unfortunately this wasn't presented as a dramatic plot twist, which would have been more entertaining, I think.

Anyway, Revenants. Intelligent zombies who come back from the grave to exact horrible revenge on those who killed them. A fine idea, and very easy to work into a game: either the players have killed somebody who is now after vengeance, they become pawns in the plans of a Revenant, or one of them dies and is Revenant-ised. Whatever - all of them are good.

I'd like to work out the chance of becoming a Revenant. The stipulations are the you have to have a Constitution of 18, a Wisdom or Intelligence of 16+, and stats amounting to a total of over 90; you then get a 5% chance. It seems slightly odd to limit the process to people who are virtually superheros already - I can't help but think that those of us who are unhealthy and stupid should also get to take revenge. Murder is murder after all!

Revenants are tough - they are immune to the typical anti-undead arsenal, and regenerate. Like most regenerators, though, they are vulnerable to fire. Rather disappointingly, if they are destroyed or if the body rots, that is the end of them. I would have preferred it if the spirit were to search for different hosts each time it body is destroyed - a little bit like that Australian fellow from the Matrix films.

JRM

03-31-2009 11:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10178475)

*However, if it only needs enough **total** energy to, say, melt a kilogram of steel, in its entire system and can instantaneously shunt that energy around at will via some kind of magic, then the total energy needed is only ~900k (assuming its perfectly efficient, heatloss could drastically increase that), which can be obtained from 90kg of meat.*

I should point out that this ~900kJ is probably an underestimate. I guesstimated it based on an "average value" for steel's melting point (which, unfortunately, varies depending on the type of steel) and specific heat (the energy needed to increase the temperate which, even more unfortunately, varies with different types of steel and changes as the temperature change). Plus, I couldn't find what steel's heat of fusion was (the energy needed to change it from solid to liquid when it reaches melting temperature). I did find an abstract for a paper on making Carbon steel by smelting powdered steel which indicated this process required ~5400kJ per kilogram, excluding heat lost from the blast furnace. That may be a more appropriate figure, if we assume processes of similar efficiency are involved.

It may be useful to compare the energies requires to melt and boil water. If we begin at -10 degrees C and assume the 5400 kJ/kg figure above, then the energy needed to blast-melt a kilo of steel would melt just over

14.3 kg of ice, or vaporize about 1.7 kg ice into steam. That's surprisingly little, but then water has a remarkably high enthalpy.

If the Remorhaz was radiating 70kW of power at 800K as I hypothesized earlier, that's enough energy every minute to melt 11.2 kg of ice or vaporize 1.4 kg of ice. If it's the 2500K 'blast furnace' version it's melting 1.1 tonnes of ice a minute instead, so even it would take some time to create a meltwater pool of significant size. (assuming it's only radiative heat, convective & conductive heating should increase those figures greatly).

I had another idea about Ice and the Remorhaz. If a big chunk of ice hits a red-hot remorhaz's back, wouldn't it dump heat into the 'attack' as usual? The resulting steam explosion could be powerful enough to break the Polar Worm's back.

Maybe that is how Frost Giant's hunt Remorhaz, they anger them and then toss ice boulders onto their spines?

JRM

04-01-2009 12:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10179594)

I'm actually a chemical engineer, so I did in fact realize that. It was an example of using hyperbole to point out the ridiculousness of the situation... a time-honored Internets tradition.

Appropriate that some pedant pointed out the factual error, also a time-honored Internet tradition. :p:D

So you're a chemical engineer are you, now all we need is a metallurgist to tell us how much heat we need for that Remorhaz to melt steel.:o

I don't really care that it's ridiculous so long as I'm having fun, which is possibly another hallowed internet tradition.:D

To me, AD&D seems a rather curious mix of magical-fantasy and real-world facts, which allows for a lot of amusement from ~~pointless arguments~~ fascinatingly constructive debates of this sort.:)

JRM

04-01-2009 12:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10179875)

Revenant

SNIP

I'd like to work out the chance of becoming a Revenant. The stipulations are the you have to have a Constitution of 18, a Wisdom or Intelligence of 16+, and stats amounting to a total of over 90; you then get a 5% chance.

Hmm, it'd be pretty low. Assuming best 4 out of 3d6 the chance of rolling the 18 is 21/1296 and the chance of rolling either 16+ is 169/1296. Multiply those together is 599781/2176782336 or ~0.027% and you still have to roll high enough on the other three stats to bring the total to 90+. I can't be arsed working out the exact odds of that, but it involves rolling a total of 36-40 or more on Str, Dex & Cha. Just eyeballing it, that's probably around 1:100, so in total somewhere around one in 300,000 characters will be eligible for Revenancy.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10179875)

It seems slightly odd to limit the process to people who are virtually superheros already - I can't help but think that those of us who are unhealthy and stupid should also get to take revenge. Murder is murder after all!

Definitely right! The monster should allow for the helpless innocent murder victim returned from the grave as an unstoppable engine of destruction. They've already said it requires "exceptional circumstances", they could have just left it at that and DM's fiat. Although I can understand why a person with high Con or mental stats would have the will-power or tenacity of life to be more likely to return from the grave.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10179875)

Rather disappointingly, if they are destroyed or if the body rots, that is the end of them. I would have preferred it if the spirit were to search for different hosts each time it body is destroyed - a little bit like that Australian fellow from the Matrix films.

A revenant can do that "body-swap" thing, according to the Monstrous Compendium, but only if all three of its mental stats are 18.

Kakita Kojiro

04-01-2009 01:45 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10179932)

So you're a chemical engineer are you, now all we need is a metallurgist to tell us how much heat we need for that Remorhaz to melt steel.:o

Oh, no. Down that road lies only madness, my friend.

In addition to me as the ChemE, I've got two biologists (one with PhD, one working on it), a linguist, a hobbyist swordsmith, and a computer guy (as required; all game groups must have a computer guy). If I start applying my specialty to games, they *all* will. That'd be a pedantpalooza, not gaming.

As it is, our game nearly derails at the appearance of giant insects, faux-latinized plurals, or references to "longswords". Remorhaz chemistry would be beyond the pale. (besides... I can't think of anyreasonable reaction that could be going on inside those things, anyway :o)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10180108)

A revenant can do that "body-swap" thing, according to the Monstrous Compendium, but only if all three of its mental stats are 18.

With that many 18s, I deduce such revenants must have once been GMPCs, understandably murdered by the annoyed PCs. This seems like a set-up to get the unkillable GMPC, then...

Sleeper

04-01-2009 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10179586)

Why minimal energy loss for visible thermal energy as opposed to IR?

For a glow, not heat.

And the heat of fusion for iron seems to be in the high 200s kJ/kg. Don't know about steel.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10180108)

Just eyeballing it, that's probably around 1:100, so in total somewhere around one in 300,000 characters will be eligible for Revenancy.

A quick Monte Carlo simulation using 3d6 came up with 7 out of a million characters that met the basic requirements (Con = 18, Int or Wis > 16, total >= 90), and the 5% chance means that's about 1 in 3,000,000. Using 4d6 drop lowest, there were 276/1,000,000 which works out to 1 in 70,000 or so. *cough* plot device */cough*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10180363)

In addition to me as the ChemE, I've got two biologists (one with PhD, one working on it), a linguist, a hobbyist swordsmith, and a computer guy (as required; all game groups must have a computer guy). If I start applying my specialty to games, they all will. That'd be a pedantpalooza, not gaming.

Quickly starts to resemble work, doesn't it? It can be fun occasionally, but I have no problems with some wild speculation followed by a good dose of handwavium, either. :)

6inTruder

04-01-2009 02:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Damn! Now I want to have a little adventure in the 4ed game I'm about to start where the PCs get embroiled in a Revenant (former Bard) revenging itself on the gang who killed it and its lover!

Monsieur Meuble

04-01-2009 03:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Good Lord ! We discuss for six pages on the energetic balance of the rhemoraz in Newtonian physic up to the joule in a fantasy world where "Cold" is a type of energy, and now we are about to calculate the statistical chances of a random character becoming a revenant depending on its method of rolling in a narrative-driven world !

Can't we just discuss the possibility of a potent evil wizard who, almost slain by the PC, turns himself into a lich, then get killed, leave phantom, come back as a revenant, get killed once again, leave another phantom and come back once more a spectre while its bones are used as Skeleton ? (not a zombie : he has been killed with fire the third time)

And can we put more undead templates in this story of the bad guy that just keep coming back ?

Sleeper

04-01-2009 03:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10179875)

Revenant

Where do Revenants originally come from? I seem to remember reading a short story in one of those Dragonlance compilations a long, long time ago (Kender, Gullydwarves and Gnomes, maybe?) in which the main character was one - although unfortunately this wasn't presented as a dramatic plot twist, which would have been more entertaining, I think.

They were one of the monsters in the original *Fiend Folio*, which means they might have first appeared in the *White Dwarf* magazine. IME, they seemed well-liked, but were rarely used. The art was actually pretty cool, which probably helped their popularity a bit.

Only people who were at the apex of physical health and the pinnacle of mental cunning become revenants. Why not turn that around? Instead of assuming that only the most hardy and clever souls are capable of becoming revenants, why not assume that people become revenants because something admires those traits, and *chooses* them to become embodied spirits of vengeance.

The god of retribution is petty, vain, and cruel, and takes pains to ensure the mortal world does not forget her. Once or twice a year, she scans the book of the recently slain, and chooses a favorite from among all the fallen mortals. One who burns with the desire for vengeance, and who embodies the attributes she holds most dear: sheer physical fortitude and persistence, and a base and cruel wit. Then she descends to their not-so-final resting place, and breathes a fraction of her power into the corpse's decaying lungs. It wakes with a gasp, and with furious energy rips fingernails and shreds flesh as it burrows out of its grave.

When a new spirit awakes, its name sears itself into the Book of Blood and Steel, her cult's most holy of books. When this happens, her priests and worshippers rejoice in an impromptu festival, and then spread to the four

quarters of the world, tracking down the restless spirit with both spells and cunning. Any worshipper who succeeds in finding the revenant while it still hunts and sees firsthand the implacable fire in its eyes, is considered blessed. If found, the site of its rebirth, where the god infused a portion of her spirit and created an avatar or exemplar of everything she holds dear, becomes littered with offerings and sacrifices from the faithful, and sometimes becomes the site of a new shrine.

If the enemies of a revenant fall under its bony claws, the deeds of the person in both life and undeath are chronicled in the Book; and the person is forever honored as a saint. For the next season, the priests stand on crates in town squares and preach Her word by shouting the tales of bloody revenge wreaked by her latest favored one to anyone who lends them an ear.

However, if the revenant fails to slay those who wronged it, it is a dark and bleak season. The priests scratch out its name from the holy speak, and only speak in whispers until the coming of the next blessed spirit.

Sleeper

04-01-2009 03:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Monsieur Meuble (Post 10180699)

Good Lord ! We discuss for six pages on the energetic balance of the rhemoraz in Newtonian physic up to the joule in a fantasy world where "Cold" is a type of energy, and now we are about to calculate the statistical chances of a random character becoming a revenant depending on its method of rolling in a narrative-driven world !

Oh no, badwrongfun!

It is okay to just not participate in discussions you don't enjoy. Or post what you do like. I rather like that the thread veers here and there, and touches on all kinds of things. The regular posting of new entries means discussion is rebooted every couple of days, which works quite well. Even if the chat wanders in a direction I don't favor, it doesn't last.

Äkräs

04-01-2009 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10180418)

A quick Monte Carlo simulation using 3d6 came up with 7 out of a million characters that met the basic requirement (Con = 18, Int or Wis > 16, total >= 90), and the 5% chance means that's about 1 in 3,000,000.

Supposing that I didn't make any embarrassing mistakes on the way, the exact probability is 15902111/63474972917760 (or ~5 in a million / 20).

Quote:

Using 4d6 drop lowest, there were 276/1,000,000 which works out to 1 in 70,000 or so. *cough* plot device

/cough.

Did you remember that with 4d6 drop lowest you can arrange the values in any order you desire? (Well, at least in AD&D 1st ed you could and I'm going with that). Taking that into account the probability is 987616567434049/438739012807557120 which is approximately 0.2% or 2 in a thousand. (This figure is more likely to be correct than the previous one).

Monsieur Meuble

04-01-2009 04:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10180811)
Oh no, badwrongfun!

It is okay to just not participate in discussions you don't enjoy. Or post what you do like. I rather like that the thread veers here and there, and touches on all kinds of things. The regular posting of new entries means discussion is rebooted every couple of days, which works quite well. Even if the chat wanders in a direction I don't favor, it doesn't last.

Okay, sorry, that was tongue-in-cheek-sih, seeing two consecutive monsters leading to math-heavy discussions...

Sleeper

04-01-2009 05:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I do like the idea of someone that manages to come back as *two* separate undead at the same time, Monsieur Meuble. Perhaps the higher soul is the person's nature or morality. This is the part that goes to the Upper Planes. The lower soul is the memories, and becomes part of the World Soul, the Akashic Records. When a person dies, the higher soul goes to its reward, and slowly loses contact with its lower soul. When this process is complete, the soul is eligible for reincarnation. If the body becomes a corporeal, intelligent undead, the connection to the lower soul is restored. However, the lack of higher soul means the person acts without moral restraint, explaining their generally evil nature.

All deaths can create phantoms. They're just memories, a link to a portion of the World Soul. A creature can also be raised as spectre or other incorporeal undead. Unfettered from the body, the creature retains the memories of the original creature, but lacks any sense of right or wrong. The same body could also be raised as an unintelligent undead, like a skeleton. Lacking memories or a conscience, it is a simple automaton. The higher soul of the same creature can be reborn, in a new body. Perhaps the world soul works on some kind of file-locking process. Only one connection to a particular set of memories can exist. If a phantom exists, the spectre can't remember how it died. If the spectre exists, a reincarnated soul's memory of its previous life can't be restored.

However, perhaps there is an exception. When the conscious mind is sleeping, the record lock is released. Perhaps instead of being powerless in daylight, spectres simply don't exist between sunrise and sunset. Until night falls, they just aren't. So the reincarnated person might start to recall memories of their former life, but only during the day. However, those memories are mixed with nightmarish horror. Not memories of their life, but horrible memories of their unlife as well.

So our hero dies. We have a phantom, who replays the death. A malevolent spectre who remembers being warm and

living, but feels nothing but hatred and antipathy and can't remember how it died. And we have a youth, who fears to sleep during the day because in his dreams he remembers being a great hero... but also, a monster. And somewhere out there, a necromancer raised his old body and sent it out to kill his family from his previous life.

What happens when he stumbles upon his old body's zombie, raised by the spectre who shares the memories of his former life, strangling an elderly stranger that he for some reason recognizes as his wife?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Äkräs (Post 10180866)

Supposing that I didn't make any embarrassing mistakes on the way, the exact probability is 15902111/63474972917760 (or ~5 in a million / 20).

About 40% off my figure, which is pretty good considering I only had 7 hits.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Äkräs (Post 10180866)

Did you remember that with 4d6 drop lowest you can arrange the values in any order you desire? (Well, at least in AD&D 1st ed you could and I'm going with that). Taking that into accord the probability is 987616567434049/438739012807557120 which is approximately 0.2% or 2 in a thousand. (This figure is more likely to be correct than the previous one).

I figured the expected number of revenants in the general population of elite adventuring-types was more useful than the chance of a specific character optimized toward becoming a revenant actually becomes one.

YojimboC

04-01-2009 05:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10179875)

Where do Revenants originally come from?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10180715)

They were one of the monsters in the original Fiend Folio, which means they might have first appeared in the White Dwarf magazine. IME, they seemed well-liked, but were rarely used. The art was actually pretty cool, which probably helped their popularity a bit.

What Sleeper said. The art for the revenant in the *Fiend Folio* was absolutely fantastic, done by the same guy who did the Githyanki on the cover I believe, and the revenant looked so good he even got two illustrations. Man, I always wanted to use a revenant in a campaign, but I never managed to pull it off.

The closest I ever came was coming with a superhero who was a revenant. I don't know why, but I always

rooted for the poor fellows -- returning from the dead to avenge their murders sounds like a noble quest to me.

Found this on the internet, so take it as you will:

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wikipedia

A revenant is a visible ghost or animated corpse that was believed to return from the grave to terrorize the living.[1] The word "revenant" is derived from the French, revenir, "to return"; in French, "revenant" means "returning". Belief in revenants emerged in Western Europe (especially Great Britain, and later carried by Anglo-Norman invaders to Ireland) during the High Middle Ages. Though later legend and folklore depicts revenants as returning for a specific purpose (e.g., revenge against the deceased's killer), in most Medieval depictions they simply return to harass their surviving families and neighbours. Revenants share a number of characteristics with folkloric vampires.

demiurge1138

04-01-2009 06:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

That Wikipedia entry has some good ideas in it. Tying the revenant to the family line and not to an individual murderer lets you do a Hound of the Baskervilles sort of thing, with the cursed family beset upon by tragedies inflicted by the revenant, and the PCs have to find out how to redress the injury even though the actual murderer is long since dead.

Also, the use of the word "harass" gives me the image of a juvenile, annoying revenant who merely irritates the family that wronged it, not kill or ruin--things like throwing rocks at the windows, directing weak-but-annoying monsters like gremlins to their gates, vandalizing their property and spooking the livestock, things like that.

And I agree to the sentiment that revenants always struck me as the most sympathetic and interesting of the undead. I love the idea of a revenant private detective, who uses his skills at man-hunting to prevent others from dying in the streets like he did, always piecing together the clues to determine who really killed him, and why..

JRM

04-01-2009 04:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10180418)

And the heat of fusion for iron seems to be in the high 200s kJ/kg. Don't know about steel.

Gah! I looked up Iron for the melting point, but didn't think to check its heat of fusion.:(

Thanks for the pointer, Sleeper.

Let's see Iron's heat of fusion is 13.8 kJ/mol which works out as ~250 kJ/kg, so would increase my energy guesstimate to 1050 kJ/kg.

That's not very much when spread over the Remorhaz's back, if we spread a kilogram of steel over my estimate of a Remorhaz's heat-vane area of 3 square metres it's only 44 microns thick, and would cool down within minutes due to radiative heat losses alone. If it had to have enough heat to melt steel at each point of impact it would have to have hundreds of times the energy on its back, and probably at least as much in its guts.

JRM

04-01-2009 04:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10181572)

And I agree to the sentiment that revenants always struck me as the most sympathetic and interesting of the undead. I love the idea of a revenant private detective, who uses his skills at man-hunting to prevent others from dying in the streets like he did, always piecing together the clues to determine who really killed him, and why..

Am I wrong to think that revenant PI should team up with the Otyugh PI to form a partnership the players will never forget!:)

Anyhows, that raises a question. An AD&D revenant appears to be created by the urge to kill its murderer(s). Does it have to know who killed it? If not, what happens - does it hunt down every murderer it hears about, in the hope of eventually slaying its own? Does it kill all its enemies, hoping one of them was responsible? Does it go mad with frustration and just slaughter everyone it encounters, just in case they're guilty of its murder? Does it give up in despair and crawl back into its tomb? I suppose it's possible a revenant can only be created if it can identify its killer - it's the personal touch that gives it the tad more rage it needs to claw its way out of the grave - but I like the idea that revenants can be created by undirected anger at their deaths, and each deals with it in a manner that matches their personalities.

EDIT: After typing that 'personal touch' bit I'm now imagining a revenant who came back for revenge because its murderer said "I's going to kill yous, *and your mamma's fat too.*"

Just one little insult added the necessary 0.2 millithaums of psycho-magical energy its spirit needed to make the vivo-necro state transition.:cool:

And yes, I am not being serious.:p

noisms

04-02-2009 08:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Roc

First things first: this is the second in a triumvirate of crap (in my opinion) illustrations, though we have to wait for the next entry for the pinnacle of awfulness. This picture is not technically *that* bad, but just too cartoonish and not at all evocative. There's no sense of the "Wow! That bird is carrying off an *elephant!*" that there should be.

Now that I've got that off my chest... Rocs. Gargantuan birds of prey, with wingspans of 120' and a penchant for eating elephants. How can you go wrong? This entry does however bring up the hitherto (I think) undiscussed-in-these-threads issue of big-creatures-and-damage. How is it, for example, that a Roc's claws only deal out 3d6 hit points? That's only about twice as damaging as a long sword. Think about that for a second. A *60' tall eagle* grabs you with its talons. And that's only the same as being hit twice with a sword? Odd, don't you think? I know that being squished by

a Roc's claws isn't exactly heroic, but still.

There's plenty to complain about in this entry, actually: there is a 65% chance that if a Roc grabs you, your arms will be pinned to your side (not 66% or 64%, mark you - 65%), and a 95% chance that a Roc will try to carry you off if it takes hold. Meanwhile, there is a 15% chance of finding eggs in a nest, and -5 to surprise rolls on diving Roc attacks. Grr. And bah. Surely there must have been an easier way of sorting out this sort of thing.

Anyway, I do like Rocs, believe it or not. Who wouldn't? There's so much you can use to make a game interesting. From treasure in the nest (taken there when the Roc carries off horses or camels bearing trade goods) to the fact that mountain dwarves employ teams of adventurers as Roc-egg smashers, to the usefulness of Roc feathers in spell casting to the way Storm and Cloud giants tame the things for riding. Great! Although this - "Rocs serve to keep down the number of large predators, as they are fond of ankheg, purple worms, and harpies. Thanks to the rocs' prodigious appetites, these creatures are not swarming about with impunity" - is, let's face it, a bit silly.

YojimboC

04-02-2009 11:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Rocs are dumb.

There, I said it.

Animals that large that aren't unique (like Godzilla) or forces of nature (like Gargantua) but are meant to be a viable, living species with breeding populations and such, simply break my normally robust suspension of disbelief.

Sleeper

04-03-2009 12:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10188674)

Now that I've got that off my chest... Rocs. Gargantuan birds of prey, with wingspans of 120' and a penchant for eating elephants. How can you go wrong? This entry does however bring up the hitherto (I think) undiscussed-in-these-threads issue of big-creatures-and-damage. How is it, for example, that a Roc's claws only deal out 3d6 hit points? That's only about twice as damaging as a long sword. Think about that for a second. A 60' tall eagle grabs you with its talons. And that's only the same as being hit twice with a sword? Odd, don't you think? I know that being squished by a Roc's claws isn't exactly heroic, but still.

How much damage do you think it should do?

Ratoslov

04-03-2009 01:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10189374)

Rocs are dumb.

Dumb as a roc, even.

YojimboC

04-03-2009 08:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 10189872)
Dumb as a roc, even.

Oi.

EmperorSeth

04-03-2009 11:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

At this point, can anyone hear this name and not imagine Sean Connery saying it? Because I know I must.

ESkemp

04-03-2009 11:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'm just surprised the two-headed roc isn't a staple of the D&D roc. I know the game's had its fair share of designers who are also aficionados of Harryhausen movies.

JRM

04-04-2009 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10189374)
Rocs are dumb.

There, I said it.

Animals that large that aren't unique (like Godzilla) or forces of nature (like Gargantua) but are meant to be a viable living species with breeding populations and such, simply break my normally robust suspension of disbelief.

Ah, but that was only until a druid cast an *awaken* spell upon a roc and discovered they are the greatest natural bards on the Prime Material plane.

Imagine the scene: A hushed open-air arena, a huge bird attired in glorious plumage descends upon the stage, spreads its wings over audience and starts screaming out the lyrics of *Eye of the Eagle*.

Yup, no doubt about it.

Those birds roc.:)

Kakita Kojiro

04-04-2009 01:29 AM

Oy.

JRM

04-04-2009 02:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10188674)

Roc

First things first: this is the second in a triumvirate of crap (in my opinion) illustrations, though we have to wait for the next entry for the pinnacle of awfulness. This picture is not technically that bad, but just too cartoonish and not at all evocative. There's no sense of the "Wow! That bird is carrying off an elephant!" that there should be.

Well, while I certainly feel said illustration is rather weak and cartoonish, and when I last looked at it it made me think "why is that eagle carrying off a minimal elephant?", I didn't think minimal elephants grew that small" more than "look at the size of that!".

In partial defense it can be very tricky giving an idea of size when you've just got an animal with no familiar objects to compare it with. If the picture had a landscape with houses, or some humans for size-comparison, it'd have been much easier to get the Wow factor.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10188674)

Now that I've got that off my chest... Rocs. Gargantuan birds of prey, with wingspans of 120' and a penchant for eating elephants. How can you go wrong? This entry does however bring up the hitherto (I think) undiscussed-in-these-threads issue of big-creatures-and-damage. How is it, for example, that a Roc's claws only deal out 3d6 hit points? That's only about twice as damaging as a long sword. Think about that for a second. A 60' tall eagle grabs you with its talons. And that's only the same as being hit twice with a sword? Odd, don't you think? I know that being squished by a Roc's claws isn't exactly heroic, but still.

Well I guess it depends on how you think damage in D&D should scale, but then it begins to have the perennial argument of what hit points are. Still it does seem odd that a Roc does only 3-18 per claw, I'd think 3-30 may be suitable, based on other Gargantuan monsters like the Storm Giant (3-30+12 damage) or Red Dragon (1-10/1-10/3-30 damage).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10188674)

Anyway, I do like Rocs, believe it or not. Who wouldn't? There's so much you can use to make a game interesting. From treasure in the nest (taken there when the Roc carries off horses or camels bearing trade goods) to the fact that mountain dwarves employ teams of adventurers as Roc-egg smashers, to the usefulness of Roc feathers in spell casting to the way Storm and Cloud giants tame the things for riding. Great! Although this - "Rocs serve to keep down the number of large predators, as they are fond of ankheg, purple worms, and harpies. Thanks to the rocs' prodigious appetites, these creatures are not swarming about with impunity" - is, let's face it, a bit silly.

Well we know from Sinbad that egg-smashing ends with the Rocs wanting to wreak a horrible revenge. (Hmm... speaking of horrible revenge, do Rocs ever return as Revenants? :D) That very story has Ma and Pa Roc sinking a ship by dive-bombing huge boulders at the vessel. I'd have liked them to have included some mention of that in the Monstrous Manual.

As for the Ankheg and Purple Worms, both those animals are subterranean, so how do the Rocs find them? Do these arthropods occasionally venture onto the surface for some reason (mating?) at a time and location the Rocs know of, or does the Roc use some kind of "worm charming" to lure them above ground?

I remember reading another Sinbad tale where he finds a valley full of gigantic snakes and gemstones, which is the favourite hunting ground of a Roc. Maybe that's what inspired the liking for Purple Worm / Ankheg meat, or it could be just the old "birds like to eat worms" magnified to Gargantuan scale?

Still, humanity should be glad that Rocs prefer to hunt prey of Large or Huge size rather than man-sized victims. Just imagine an owl magnified to the same scale as a Roc is larger than an eagle. A roc-scale owl could be a 30-45 foot long nocturnal predator with a 70-100 foot wingspan, able to hear a man's footsteps from a furlong away and swoop soundlessly down to snatch man and livestock away to their doom.

I also like the idea of a roc-scale peregrine falcon that dives to smash flying creatures out of the air, there are plenty of AD&D monsters that would make suitable prey - e.g. giant insects, pteranodon, gryphon, pegasus, wyvern and even young dragons.

The Last Conformist

04-04-2009 07:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10188674)

Now that I've got that off my chest... Rocs. Gargantuan birds of prey, with wingspans of 120' and a penchant for eating elephants. How can you go wrong? This entry does however bring up the hitherto (I think) undiscussed-in-these-threads issue of big-creatures-and-damage. How is it, for example, that a Roc's claws only deal out 3d6 hit points? That's only about twice as damaging as a long sword. Think about that for a second. A 60' tall eagle grabs you with its talons. And that's only the same as being hit twice with a sword? Odd, don't you think? I know that being squished by a Roc's claws isn't exactly heroic, but still.

Look at it this way - a good hit by a sword will kill you dead. How much worse could getting squished by a humongous bird possibly be? :p

JRM

04-04-2009 07:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10195850)

Look at it this way - a good hit by a sword will kill you dead. How much worse could getting squished by a humongous bird possibly be? :p

That argument's little different from saying "being stabbed with a chopstick can kill you dead, so how come chopsticks do how much worse could a good hit by a sword possibly be?" (And, yes AD&D did have rules for chopsticks are melee weapons.):confused:

Although I fear this line of inquiry will end in discord, since it depends on the dreaded "what are hit points" issue.

Sleeper

04-04-2009 11:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

In 3.X, base damage scales according to the square root of the linear dimension. Quadruple in length (e.g. Medium to Huge) and double the damage (e.g. 1d6 to 2d6). This ignores Strength modifiers, but except for a few special cases earlier editions didn't really factor that in. Using this, and the roc as a base, the expected damage for the giant eagle (similar morphology, with a known wingspan of 20 ft) is 1.22d6 (~1d8) with a claw, and 1.63d6 (~1d10) with a bite. That's a little different than the actual 1d6/1d6/2d6... but if you add up the claw/claw/bite routines and compare, the giant eagle's average of 14 points of damage is very close to the expected total damage of a scaled-down roc (14.29). The only other bird we can easily compare is the large hawk (5 ft wingspan), which doesn't work out as nicely (the hawk-sized roc should do about 7.14 or roughly 2d6 or 3d4 damage, which is almost double the actual 1d2/1d2/1). But then humans and smaller-than-human creatures in D&D don't seem to follow the same scale as larger-than-human creatures (humans should really have about 3 HD, for instance).

noisms

04-05-2009 09:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10194425)

Still, humanity should be glad that Rocs prefer to hunt prey of Large or Huge size rather than man-sized victims. Just imagine an owl magnified to the same scale as a Roc is larger than an eagle. A roc-scale owl could be a 30-45 foot long nocturnal predator with a 70-100 foot wingspan, able to hear a man's footsteps from a furlong away and swoop soundlessly down to snatch man and livestock away to their doom.

I also like the idea of a roc-scale peregrine falcon that dives to smash flying creatures out of the air, there are plenty of AD&D monsters that would make suitable prey - e.g. giant insects, pteranodon, gryphon, pegasus, wyvern and even young dragons.

Those ideas are getting used.

noisms

04-05-2009 09:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10198031)

In 3.X, base damage scales according to the square root of the linear dimension. Quadruple in length (e.g. Medium to Huge) and double the damage (e.g. 1d6 to 2d6). This ignores Strength modifiers, but except for a few special cases earlier editions didn't really factor that in. Using this, and the roc as a base, the expected damage for the giant eagle (similar morphology, with a known wingspan of 20 ft) is 1.22d6 (~1d8) with a claw, and 1.63d6 (~1d10) with a bite. That's a little different than the actual 1d6/1d6/2d6... but if you add up the claw/claw/bite routines and compare, the giant eagle's average of 14 points of damage is very close to the expected total damage of a scaled-down roc (14.29). The only other bird we can easily compare is the large hawk (5 ft wingspan), which doesn't work out as nicely (the hawk-sized roc should do about 7.14 or roughly 2d6 or 3d4 damage, which is almost double the actual 1d2/1d2/1). But then humans and smaller-than-human creatures in D&D don't seem to follow the same scale as larger-than-human creatures (humans should really have about 3 HD, for instance).

Well, a Roc has a wingspan of 120', which is six times the size of a Giant Eagle. So... my maths isn't what it was.

Actually, having looked at a few of the other 'big monster' entries, the damage dealt is pretty low. A Red Dragon of comparable size to a Roc only does 1-10 damage per claw - which I don't believe scales.

Kakita Kojiro

04-05-2009 11:10 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10195850)

Look at it this way - a good hit by a sword will kill you dead. How much worse could getting squished by a humongous bird possibly be? :p

Ach. You're thinking about this all wrong.

D&D worlds are places where the common housecat's favored prey are Commoner NPCs and 1st level Wizards. So the rocs are obviously dining on mid-level wizards, at least. Not too shabby.

Sleeper

04-05-2009 11:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10199512)

Well, a Roc has a wingspan of 120', which is six times the size of a Giant Eagle. So... my maths isn't what it was.

Actually, having looked at a few of the other 'big monster' entries, the damage dealt is pretty low. A Red Dragon of comparable size to a Roc only does 1-10 damage per claw - which I don't believe scales.

Yes, the square root of 6 is the multiplier/divider I used, though dragons do scale (the combat modifier based on age is applied to damage).

Overall, the damage for large creatures scales fairly slowly. That's deliberate. Otherwise, the only way to fight giants would be to set their stockade on fire, and have a thousand archers ready to shoot any that try to escape. Sending a handful of elite heroes into the stockade would just result in a lot of dead wannabe heroes. And the only solution to a dragon infestation would be to pay them tribute, or pack up and leave the country.

2E is also in a bit of a transitional weird spot. Look at how many monsters have a bonus to damage from strength. And then look again at how many do not. Given the relatively low damage, even a small bonus can bump the damage output of that monster well above its peers. 1E mostly lacked this, except in special cases or later books (ogres, but only when using weapons; there were also a few in the MM2). Also, 1E was actually fairly consistent when it came to damage and hit dice and scaling. 2E is largely the same, but three major groups of monsters were given a major upgrade in power that broke the old standards: Dragons, demons/devils, and giants. 3E rigorously applied damage bonuses based on strength as well as a metric for increasing base damage from size, but had to add Con bonuses so hit points could leep up with the damage output (this is why fireballs got so weak; they stayed at 1d6/level instead of 1d6+stat bonus/level). 4E of course inflated hit points even more, tossed out the rules for size and used a rule of thumb instead, and supressed damage output so combat lasts longer.

noisms

04-05-2009 12:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10199893)

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1d6/level instead of 1d6+stat bonus/level). 4E of course inflated hit points even more, tossed out the rules for size and used a rule of thumb instead, and suppressed damage output so combat lasts longer.

The dragon damage modifier is only a flat +? though. So for example a dragon with an age category of 12 is approximately three times the size of a category 5 one, but only does +7 more damage.

I don't have a problem with 2e inflating the power of dragons/tanar'ri/baatezu/giants, and in fact think could maybe have gone farther. I like the idea of dragons in particular being epic monsters of myth who make even level 20 characters quake with fear. But that's just personal preference I suppose.

Sleeper

04-05-2009 01:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10200080)

The dragon damage modifier is only a flat +? though. So for example a dragon with an age category of 12 is approximately three times the size of a category 5 one, but only does +7 more damage.

+21, with a simple claw/claw/bite. Or +42 with a claw/claw/bite/tail slap or kick/wing buffet/wing buffet.

I rather like more powerful dragons, myself. But they do break the standard progression of HD/damage for their size.

The Last Conformist

04-05-2009 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10197576)

That argument's little different from saying "being stabbed with a chopstick can kill you dead, so how come chopsticks do how much worse could a good hit by a sword possibly be?" (And, yes AD&D did have rules for chopsticks are melee weapons.):confused:

The :p smiley was meant to indicate the argument was not being seriously advanced.

JRM

04-05-2009 05:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10200189)

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I suspect noisms was talking about 2E dragons, which use their age category for damage bonus per attack (e.g. a Great Wyrms Red Dragon is Age Category 12, so does 1d10+12/1d10+12/3d10+12 with a claw/claw/bite).

As for the 3E comparisons, I had a go at that a few days ago, and noticed that the regular **Eagle** is a step up in claw damage compared to the Giant Eagle & Roc. It's 1d4 for a Small creature would be 1d8 per claw if advanced to Large (like a Giant Eagle) or Gargantuan (like a Roc).

AD&D/3E comparisons monster damage are a bit tricky because Strength plays such a bigger role in the latter edition, and the Strength bonus tends to contribute a bigger proportion of damage as the monster gets bigger, which is especially significant if a monster has multiple primary attacks which get a full damage bonus.

A 3E **Roc**, for example, which does 2d6+12/2d6+12/2d8+6 averages 23 points of damage from its weapon dice (4d6+2d8 = 14+9) and 30 from its strength bonus, a total of 53. An SRD giant eagle's 1d6+4/1d6+4/1d8+2 averages 11.5 damage from its dice and 10 from its Strength, 21.5 in total. Thus, a Roc does about two-and-a-half times the Giant Eagle's damage instead of twice (which would be expected from Sleeper's square-root of length rule of thumb, which works pretty well for base damage). A Colossal Roc would do 3d6+16/3d6+16/3d8+8 or an average of 34.5 from dice (21+13.5) and 40 from Strength, totaling 74.5, which is about 3.45 times a Giant Eagle's.

Now I'd like to have bigger creatures in d20 have less of their physical damage from Strength bonus and more from dice. So, say, a human hero with a greatsword does 2d6+6 damage and an ogre with a 2d8+4. The human has a Strength score of 22 and the ogre 18, but the ogre has a "size bonus" on its Strength for certain kinds of activities (grappling, lifting & carrying etc), but uses its Strength score for skills and the like. That would stop giant monsters in 3E having incredibly high Climb and Swim skills, just because they have such hefty Strength stats.

A 'size bonus' variant could also be substitute for the extra HD of bigger monsters, giving bonus hp, bonus to Fort saves and the like. That would allow for giant animals which don't also have to possess more skill ranks and higher base attacks simply for being bigger (because they wouldn't have to be high level monsters, an elephant could just be a '4th level' Huge Animal).

Guess I should get around to roughing out the details some time.

JRM

04-05-2009 05:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10200603)

The :p smiley was meant to indicate the argument was not being seriously advanced.

That's all right, it wasn't being seriously responded to either.;

Sleeper

04-06-2009 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10200632)

I suspect noisms was talking about 2E dragons, which use their age category for damage bonus per attack (e.g. a Great Wyrms Red Dragon is Age Category 12, so does $1d10+12/1d10+12/3d10+12$ with a claw/claw/bite).

So was I. The combat modifier is +5 young adult and +12 great wyrms. The difference is +7, and since it applies to *each* attack, the great wyrms does an extra +21 with only a claw/claw/bite routine, and +42 when adding wing buffets and a kick or tail slap. (Incidentally, adding +6d6 or +12d6 to attack has the same average).

And I thought I was pretty clear that the square root of the linear dimension only applied to the base damage. In 3E, the Str and Con modifiers are responsible for the inflation in both damage and hit points. This doesn't follow as simple a formula, and also makes it harder to compare the different editions (hit dice and to a lesser degree base damage are often the same across 3E and both its immediate ancestors).

The math can be determined, though it's fuzzier. Assuming an average Medium monster does 1d8 with a primary attack and 1d4 with a secondary attack (very arbitrary; this could be a bad mean) and has a Str of 10, each size increase boosts base damage by the square root of 2 and adds +6 from Str (1.5x+4 from +8 Str). Just glancing at the numbers, this seems to roughly double damage. This will vary based on the number of attacks and the size of attacks of course (e.g. boars less, dragons more). I wouldn't take that doubling as a general guideline, though. There are just too many different attack routines that will impact this in different ways, and you'd have to compare them all to see what makes a reasonable mean.

Mechanically, I wish the 3E designers went the other way in their design. What they did was take the base numbers, and then rigorously apply modifiers. This had the result of dramatically increasing the final numbers (hp, damage, and other things like ACs, saves, and so forth). If they kept the same *final* numbers (i.e. the 10.5 average damage caused by a monster's attack, instead of using an approximation or a slightly lower number as a base and applying all those new mods for a much higher final result), 3E would have been out-of-the-box mostly compatible with the older versions, and the numbers would have been smaller and more manageable.

And the fix to Climb and Swim are to base them on Dexterity, not Strength. Big creatures already have a faster base move, which accounts for the impact of their Str. Dex is how well they use that speed.

noisms

04-06-2009 11:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Roper

I've had difficulty taking this monster seriously because of the picture - which makes me snigger every time I look at it - and consequently haven't often used it. It is essentially a type of invertebrate thing which lurks in dungeons pretending to be a rock (never seen a monster like *that* before), and which shoots out tendrils to capture its victims. These tendrils appear to be coated with some sort of poison (it isn't actually made explicit) which weakens prey, so that it is all the easier to draw towards the maw.

There isn't all that much to say about the Roper - it's your bog-standard dungeon-ecology fare. There is an 'lol' moment about half-way through the entry where a mad impulse on the part of the writer has resulted in the line: "A group of ropers has been named a 'cluster' by scholars with nothing better to do." I quite like the little window that opens onto the mind of the designers. Whoever wrote that line must have been so sick of having 'sages' pop up in

every entry and trying to find something interesting to say about them.

The Roper is also a notable instance of the trope where creatures which obviously have no earthly reason to want to store treasure somehow end up storing it. In this case the monster has a 'gizzard' in which platinum and gems can be found, because they are indigestible. I wish D&D in general would rely more on the idea of selling body parts for money in the case of monsters like the Roper - rather than contriving ways to have them keep treasure. Body-part selling is frequently mentioned in the MM but is a very under-developed idea; often you don't even get approximate prices.

This entry also contains a subspecies called a Storoper (stone-roper; geddit?) which is a creatures resembling "a statue of a roper". It attacks with tendrils in much the same way as the Roper proper, though its poison is paralysing rather than debilitating.

Inyssius

04-06-2009 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Things I Know About Ropers:

Lords of Madness (3.5 Ed.): If you drill a hole in the side of a roper and jam a mind-flayer tadpole in, the tadpole will attempt to transform the roper into an illithid the same way it would transform, say, an elf. **Successfully.** The resulting monstrosity is known as a *urophion*. Sadly, this bizarre creature is--more or less--physically identical to other ropers, though it has the intense *mind blast*, at-will *suggestion*, and concealed skull-cracking beak of a normal mind flayer. Though coldly brilliant as any human, the mind flayers regard them as little more than guard dogs.

The Dungeonomicon, which I personally regard as canonical as any printed book: "Since the Roper really has no society (and possibly the most obscure language in Core D&D) [Owlbear! Elven Cat! Screw you, Roper!], it's very difficult for it to understand the possible ramifications of offending pan-humanoid society. So now they've done it, and they really haven't noticed the fallout they are receiving from that decision. Ropers pretty much attack anything they see, and now everyone that sees a roper attacks them. In the D&D worlds, ropers are on the brink of extinction and it probably never even occurs to them that their heavy tendrilled dealings with the other races have pushed them to this state."

Sleeper

04-06-2009 01:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I wonder if ropers evolved from smaller ancestors. Intrepid explorers walk into a cavern. Their movement and fire disturbs something, and suddenly a cloud of bats darts toward the entrance in a confusing dance of shadows. In the midst of the flurry, there is a darting snap. A tiny little stalactite shot out a small, sticky tendril. Dangling from its grip is a desperate bat, squirming and keening, but getting weaker. Suddenly the tendrils tense, and there is an audible crack as the bat's neck snaps. If they stay and watch, they can see the stalactite's shell split into a maw, and absorb the unlucky bat.

Like piercers, perhaps they're subterranean molluscs. Their tendrils are modified feet. Their stony casing is a modified shell. They are quick, because they had to catch nimble flying mice. And they were originally fairly weak, so they developed the ability to exude a poison that saps the strength from mammals.

As the prey multiplied underneath the earth, they grew larger. As they grew larger, the ability to move became less important. Unlike their kin, the piercers, who retained the ability to move slowly across the ceiling, ropers slowed and slowed until they finally became sessile. Their feet or tendrils grew longer and longer, to compensate for their immobility. And with their vast size and weight, they could no longer hang from roofs. The tiny stalactites have become enormous stalagmites, whose life is circumscribed by the furthest extent of their tendrils.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

According to Paizo's *Into the Darklands*, the consequence of ropers being

- a) highly intelligent
- b) exceedingly evil and
- c) ambush predators

has led them to become sort of sages of evil, pondering to themselves at length about the philosophical implications of pain and the intricacies of wickedness because they have nothing else to occupy their minds. And they always love it when a meal has something interesting to say as its life is being sapped through the tendrils. They finally have someone to talk to! Albeit briefly.

Sleeper

04-06-2009 04:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10203791)

According to Paizo's Into the Darklands, the consequence of ropers being

- a) highly intelligent*
- b) exceedingly evil and*
- c) ambush predators*

has led them to become sort of sages of evil, pondering to themselves at length about the philosophical implications of pain and the intricacies of wickedness because they have nothing else to occupy their minds. And they always love it when a meal has something interesting to say as its life is being sapped through the tendrils. They finally have someone to talk to! Albeit briefly.

Sounds more crazy aescetic hermits in the woods or navel-gazing bodhisavattas than sages. Sages imply scholarship, and collegiate debate and learning.

Though with the tentacles, spiky exterior, and fascination with pain, a roper could also play the role of a *Hellraiser* cenobite. Perhaps they are the secret masters of the dungeons in which they reside. They send their half-flayed minions to deposit puzzles and traps around their domain, each of which is cunningly designed to bring them new fleshy toys with which to play. Their playthings are given the greatest gift the roper can provide, the ecstasy of pure pain.

Or perhaps a roper is what happens when a dao that grows too old and wicked, but refuses to die. They melt and twist until their formerly strapping bodies become one with the native element, until they turn into twisted lumps of stone. Perhaps some even retain the ability to grant wishes, and delight in twisting them.

Thane of Fife

04-06-2009 09:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I don't understand the point of the Storoper. A regular roper looks like a rocky outcropping. A storoper looks like a statue of a roper. How does looking like a statue of a rocky outcropping differ, in any way, from looking like a rocky outcropping?

Also noteworthy is that Ropers are apparently the same heat as the stone around them, so infravision shouldn't work. You could have a community of svirfneblin with a roper living in their midsts, picking them off whenever it gets hungry, and they'd just wonder where everyone was disappearing to.

Kakita Kojiro

04-06-2009 10:59 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10203292)

... There is an 'lol' moment about half-way through the entry where a mad impulse on the part of the writer has resulted in the line: "A group of ropers has been named a 'cluster' by scholars with nothing better to do." I quite like the little window that opens onto the mind of the designers. Whoever wrote that line must have been so sick of having 'sages' pop up in every entry and trying to find something interesting to say about them.

I have a book I'm quite fond of, [A Crash of Rhinoceroses](#), which basically lists "proper" collective nouns for things. Crashes of rhinoceroses. Murders of crows. Exaltations of larks. Poms of Pekinese [dogs]. Clutches of penes. Etc.

One of the chapters talks about a Victorian parlor game, where you'd try to stump others at the party by giving them something to which they did not know the proper collective noun. This would be the *perfect* parlor game for D&D sages at one of their annual symposia. Talking about clusters of ropers, flights of dragons, traumas of Tarrasques, effetes of elves...

randomgamer8466

04-06-2009 11:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10203475)

I wonder if ropers evolved from smaller ancestors. Intrepid explorers walk into a cavern. Their movement and fire disturbs something, and suddenly a cloud of bats darts toward the entrance in a confusing dance of shadows. In the midst of the flurry, there is a darting snap. A tiny little stalactite shot out a small, sticky tendril. Dangling from its gri is a desperate bat, squirming and keening, but getting weaker. Suddenly the tendrils tense, and there is an audible crack as the bat's neck snaps. If they stay and watch, they can see the stalactite's shell split into a maw, and absorb the unlucky bat.

Cool, Sleeper. i'd let the PCs observe something like this as a "fair warning" early in a dungeon before I throw a full-sized Roper at them.

6inTruder

04-07-2009 12:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

what's the point of Storopers? Higher AC, I'd assume.

demiurge1138

04-07-2009 03:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10203821)

Sounds more crazy aescetic hermits in the woods or navel-gazing bodhisavattas than sages. Sages imply scholarship and collegiate debate and learning.

Or perhaps a roper is what happens when a dao that grows too old and wicked, but refuses to die. They melt and twist until their formerly strapping bodies become one with the native element, until they turn into twisted lumps of stone. Perhaps some even retain the ability to grant wishes, and delight in twisting them.

My wording was off a bit--but that dao idea is pure class. A roper with wishes is not something I'd like to contemplate.

Oddly for a "modified monster", storopers are rather a bit weaker than ropers. Only 6 HD. So the purpose of storopers is to throw them at lower level parties that'd get creamed by the ordinary kind.

psychojosh13

04-07-2009 09:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10194425)

As for the Ankheg and Purple Worms, both those animals are subterranean, so how do the Rocs find them? Do these arthropods occasionally venture onto the surface for some reason (mating?) at a time and location the Rocs know of or does the Roc use some kind of "worm charming" to lure them above ground?

Really? Am I the only one who thought of rocs pecking at the ground to lure the worms out? A lone roc in the mountains could trigger an avalanche when it's hungry, a small flock could level villages with the resulting seismic waves... come on people, are your evil (or at least annoying) DM powers on vacation?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10204694)

One of the chapters talks about a Victorian parlor game, where you'd try to stump others at the party by giving them

something to which they did not know the proper collective noun. This would be the perfect parlor game for D&D sages at one of their annual symposia. Talking about clusters of ropers, flights of dragons, traumas of Tarrasques, effetes of elves...

Absolutely brilliant. This would be a wonderful complement to a D&D-themed game of Yorkshiremen ("why, when I was a lad, I'd have to wake up at 10pm, an hour before I went to bed, and spend all day killing orcs just for a measly 3 coppers!")

JRM

04-07-2009 05:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10201504)

*So was I. The combat modifier is +5 young adult and +12 great wrym. The difference is +7, and since it applies to each attack, the great wrym does an extra +21 with only a claw/claw/bite routine, *snip**

And I thought I was pretty clear that the square root of the linear dimension only applied to the base damage.

Oh right, I'm afraid it wasn't very clear to me at the time. Sorry about that.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10201504)

The math can be determined, though it's fuzzier. Assuming an average Medium monster does 1d8 with a primary attack and 1d4 with a secondary attack (very arbitrary; this could be a bad mean) and has a Str of 10, each size increase boosts base damage by the square root of 2 and adds +6 from Str (1.5x+4 from +8 Str). Just glancing at the numbers, this seems to roughly double damage. This will vary based on the number of attacks and the size of attack of course (e.g. boars less, dragons more). I wouldn't take that doubling as a general guideline, though. There are just too many different attack routines that will impact this in different ways, and you'd have to compare them all to see what makes a reasonable mean.

Yes, I thought about doing that but, like you, thought there'd be so many different damage levels and special cases it'd be tricky working out the damage of various sizes of "Platonic Monster". Although I'd have used something similar to your example as a base.

Let's see:

M 1d6/1d4 Str 10(+0) - average damage 6 (6 times 1.0000)
L 1d8/1d6 Str 18(+4/2) - average damage 14 (6 times 2.3333)
H 2d6/1d8 Str 26(+8/4) - average damage 23.5 (6 times 3.9166)
G 3d6/2d6 Str 34(+12/6) - average damage 35.5 (6 times 5.9166)
C 4d6/3d6 Str 42(+16/8) - average damage 48.5 (6 times 7.9166)

That's basically Medium ×1, Large ×2, Huge ×4, Gargantuan ×6, Colossal ×8.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10201504)

Mechanically, I wish the 3E designers went the other way in their design. What they did was take the base numbers, and then rigorously apply modifiers. This had the result of dramatically increasing the final numbers (hp, damage, and other things like ACs, saves, and so forth). If they kept the same final numbers (i.e. the 10.5 average damage caused by a monster's attack, instead of using an approximation or a slightly lower number as a base and applying all those new mods for a much higher final result), 3E would have been out-of-the-box mostly compatible with the older versions, and the numbers would have been smaller and more manageable.

That's not too dissimilar to my thinking. Basically the idea I'm thinking of has the Strength score represent the **quality** of the Strength (force per unit body weight) rather than the **quantity** of the Strength (total force), which is derived from some kind of Size Factor. That way a Huge Roc might have, say, Strength 22 and do triple damage for being Huge - so it does, say, 3d6+6 with its claws. (1d6 claw times 3 plus Strength bonus), with a Size Factor modifier to other appropriate areas - Carry Capacity, Grapple, Hide *et cetera*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10201504)

And the fix to Climb and Swim are to base them on Dexterity, not Strength. Big creatures already have a faster base move, which accounts for the impact of their Str. Dex is how well they use that speed.

I don't much care for that idea since Strength is such an important factor in climbing - a creature has to have the power to lift itself easily. My preferred fix would be to have skills depend on two stats - e.g. Climb (Str+Dex), Swim (Str+Con) and so on. Indeed, I'd like most of the "single stat" attributes were changed to two stats (e.g. Will save from Wis+Cha).

4E goes part way towards that allowing you to pick one stat from a pair for certain tasks, but I'd rather have both stats contribute - so a character with an 18 and a 10 would have the same modifier in a task-area as a rival with two 14s, say.

Like many of my RPG rule ideas it may be too fiddly in practice, but that's a problem for another day.

JRM

04-07-2009 05:21 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by psychojosh13 (Post 10207328)

Really? Am I the only one who thought of rocs pecking at the ground to lure the worms out? A lone roc in the mountains could trigger an avalanche when it's hungry, a small flock could level villages with the resulting seismic waves... come on people, are your evil (or at least annoying) DM powers on vacation?

Of course, what other kind of worm charming could a Roc perform? Well they can always sing at the ground, being super-bards and all.) The other standard luring-out-the-worms trick is to soak the ground in something mildly unpleasant, so the worms surface to escape it. So, maybe the Rocs fly down to the richest fields they can find and empty their bladders, and snap up the ankhegs as they emerge? The farmers may actually like them to do this*, since it fertilizes the crops and removes those horrible subterranean monsters, although the Rocs may

wreck part of their crop.

*EDIT Except for any farmers in their fields when a Roc flies overhead spraying "worm charm fluid".:eek:

DMH

04-07-2009 08:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10204444)

I don't understand the point of the Storoper. A regular roper looks like a rocky outcropping. A storoper looks like a statue of a roper. How does looking like a statue of a rocky outcropping differ, in any way, from looking like a rocky outcropping?

There is one big difference between them physically- storopers have tentacles whereas ropers have stumps that shoot a silk or byssus like substance that sticks to prey. That and that ropers are noticeably larger really breaks the idea of a statue.

Personally I have never and will never use either. Cave fishers are much better for the roper niche.

Sleeper

04-08-2009 02:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10208605)

Of course, what other kind of worm charming could a Roc perform? Well they can always sing at the ground, being super-bards and all. ;) The other standard luring-out-the-worms trick is to soak the ground in something mildly unpleasant, so the worms surface to escape it. So, maybe the Rocs fly down to the richest fields they can find and empty their bladders, and snap up the ankhegs as they emerge? The farmers may actual like them to do this, since it fertilizes the crops and removes those horrible subterranean monsters, although the Rocs may wreck part of their crop.*

The alternative is to ask: What sufficiently large prey is available in sufficiently large quantities to feed a breeding population of titantic birds? Whales are one possibility, but rocs can probably only fly away with the younger specimens and it's hard to settle in and eat a corpse when there're only waves to perch on. Mile-high trees with huge nuts and berries is another alternative, but rocs are supposed to be giant raptors not giant robins. The classic elephant is a good option, large but not too large, and with the necessary natural population levels. Kind of bland, though. Fantasy versions might be a Lost World continent or subcontinent; imagine an Australia-sized land mass wreathed with archipelagos or an India where the craton's impact caused a continuous front of impassibly-huge mountains like the Himalayas entirely isolating the lowlands except by sea... and high-flying birds. Rocs might be known as occasional immigrants from beyond a particular sea, or from over a barrier mountain chain. They might occasionally drop the half-eaten carcasses of impossible creatures, like dinosaurs or giant insects, leading sages to speculate and putting that explorer's gleam in the eye of certain adventurers.

JRM

04-08-2009 04:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10203292)

Roper

I've had difficulty taking this monster seriously because of the picture - which makes me snigger every time I look at - and consequently haven't often used it. It is essentially a type of invertebrate thing which lurks in dungeons pretending to be a rock (never seen a monster like that before), and which shoots out tendrils to capture its victims. These tendrils appear to be coated with some sort of poison (it isn't actually made explicit) which weakens prey, so that it is all the easier to draw towards the maw.

We've said it before, but maybe all these invertebrate things which lurk in dungeons pretending to be a rock are related - the ropers, mimics, trappers, piercers, darkmantles et cetera all have a certain similarity.

Anyhows, reading through the entry two items in particular stood out to me.

Firstly:

Quote:

Ropers reproduce asexually by shedding some of their material in the form of a seed. Drawing nutrients from the cavern floor (and perhaps siphoning magical energies from deep within the earth), the infant roper grows to maturity in 2d4 weeks. Until that time has passed, the roper is indistinguishable from a boulder.

A roper grows from a seed to a nine-foot monster in just 2-8 weeks just from drawing nutrients/magic from the cavern, during which time it looks like a rock? I don't much care for that, I'd rather have them have a smaller, mobile stage - maybe something that looks nothing like an adult roper, like a cave moray, or just a miniature version of an adult that avoids large creatures, like the bat-snaring stalagtite Sleeper described. Unless some of the aforementioned monsters (like the piercer and the mimic) are actually earlier development stages of the roper?

Secondly, I don't remember the "Ropers move using large, cilia-like appendages on their undersides, which also allow them to **cling to walls and ceilings**" bit before, I've always imagined them standing on the ground like a stalagmite. A roper that's trying to snatch the PCs up while hanging upside-down from a 30' tall ceiling would make for a more interesting encounter.

JRM

04-08-2009 04:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10210352)

The alternative is to ask: What sufficiently large prey is available in sufficiently large quantities to feed a breeding

population of titantic birds? Whales are one possibility, but rocs can probably only fly away with the younger specimens and it's hard to settle in and eat a corpse when there're only waves to perch on. Mile-high trees with huge nuts and berries is another alternative, but rocs are supposed to be giant raptors not giant robins. The classic elephant is a good option, large but not too large, and with the necessary natural population levels. Kind of bland, though. Fantasy versions might be a Lost World continent or subcontinent; imagine an Australia-sized land mass wreathed with archipelagos or an India where the craton's impact caused a continuous front of impassibly-huge mountains like the Himalayas entirely isolating the lowlands except by sea... and high-flying birds. Rocs might be known as occasional immigrants from beyond a particular sea, or from over a barrier mountain chain. They might occasionally drop the half-eaten carcasses of impossible creatures, like dinosaurs or giant insects, leading sages to speculate and putting that explorer's gleam in the eye of certain adventurers.

Well as I mentioned earlier there is an Arabian tale were a Roc ate giant serpents, and elephants are an obvious favourite. Such a large predator presumably can't be too fussy about what it eats, so it probably snatches up anything large enough to make a worthwhile meal.

There are some tales in which rocs nest on islands, so maybe they fish the surrounding ocean like a supersized osprey or sea eagle - snatching up large marine organisms such as killer whales, basking sharks, small sea serpents et cetera.

Personally, I imagine a roc covering a hundreds of miles in a day, based on stories about their incredible speed - they could peck up huge serpents from the Valley of Diamonds one day, hunt elephant in the middle of the plains a few hours later, then cross the ocean in a few days to snatch up a whale for delivery it their island nest.

Mikelibrarian

04-08-2009 06:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10210743)

*Secondly, I don't remember the "Ropers move using large, cilia-like appendages on their undersides, which also allow them to **cling to walls and ceilings**" bit before, I've always imagined them standing on the ground like a stalagmite. A roper that's trying to snatch the PCs up while hanging upside-down from a 30' tall ceiling would make for a more interesting encounter.*

One of the Monsters featured on the 1st Edition Monster Manual is a Roper hanging from the ceiling of a cavern menacing an Owlbear.

Sleeper

04-08-2009 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10210743)

We've said it before, but maybe all these invertebrate things which lurk in dungeons pretending to be a rock are related - the ropers, mimics, trappers, piercers, darkmantles et cetera all have a certain similarity.

In the super-hero genre, some worlds only have one unified origin behind all supernormal powers. The Wild Card virus, for instance. Others like the DC and Marvel universes take the kitchen sink approach, where mutation, mutagenics, bioengineering, magic, incarnate gods, technological wonders, alien beings, cosmic power, and even more obscure origins are common. Using Hite's taxonomy, they can be classified into five different shades of blue.

D&D isn't quite as kitchen-sink as Rifts, Exalted, or Synnibarr, but it's up there. But it would be fascinating to reimagine the world, using a more constrained form. Excise all the dragons and other traditional monsters of fantasy. Leave behind humans, perhaps the demihumans, and spells. And then, under the earth, a complete ecology. A world at war with the surface world, not because of some kind of malign plot (though there's that, too), but because it's so alien. The organisms from one cannot successfully survive in the other, so the battle is ultimately futile. But along the edges, the Fringe, the two worlds compete. Dwarves and gnomes and halflings tunnel a bit down, and meet the uppermost and most adaptable denizens of the Underdark; and in turn the most intrepid of the subsurface beasts venture upward, toward the topside lands of light and seasons.

Because the Underdark world is ruled by denizens that long ago migrated from the cold depths of the undersea. Mobile, squishy, strangely smart squids, cuttlefish, and octopuses with convergent eyes. Largely sessile clams and mussels, oysters and barnacles. Scallops that swim by opening and closing their mouths. They have become terrestrial, or more properly subterrestrial, like their other cousins, the snails and slugs.

The underworld is the dominion of the mollusc. They have expanded and diversified. Some have become as huge as the Jinxian bandersnatch, leaving slimy trails and smashing their way through any barriers in their path, but we know the predators the best. Barnacles have infested the roofs, primarily filter-feeding on the miasma emitted by the numerous fungi, but needing the protein and abundant flesh of unwary surface dwellers to reproduce. Some have developed their feet into snares, snatching flying bats; others have grown huge and trap larger prey. Some shellless varieties have developed an imitative morphology, mimicking common objects and lying in wait for the unwary.

Cephalopods have remained at the top of the food chain. Smaller varieties squeeze through unreasonably tiny holes and passages, with suckers adapted to hold fast to the ceiling. But the so-called lords of the underworld have become parasites, entering the minds of surface creatures and forming hybrids. These hybrids find the sun painful, but can walk the surface, and plot and think. They have magic too, similar in type to the magic of their lesser cousins who trick observers into thinking their skin looks like veined wood or sense the presence of prey in the utter darkness, but the so-called mind players surpass them in versatility and power. Theirs is a magic of the mind, of thought; not the elemental power that the surface mages tap.

This is a world where the surface is dominated by green and flowering plants, and vertebrates who use a magic that grows from their vital, sun- and bone-based beings. Where the Underdark is ruled by fungi and molluscs, who use a magic based on thought, memory, and amorphism. Along the Fringe, there is conflict. But just as the fungi can't compete with the raw power of the sun harnessed by chlorophyll, perhaps the reason humans and demihumans can only go so far down is that the profusion of shells, slugs, molds, and lichen just becomes too dense. A mile below the surface, the whole ecology merges into a single biomass. The elder brains of the illithid are only the start. This is Gaia, an antediluvian even pangean remnant, and it is antithetical to humans.

Kakita Kojiro

04-08-2009 11:45 AM

Okay, **Sleeper's** mollusc underworld is creepily evocative. Good show.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10208582)

Yes, I thought about doing that but, like you, thought there'd be so many different damage levels and special cases it'd be tricky working out the damage of various sizes of "Platonic Monster". Although I'd have used something similar to your example as a base...

I was also quite liking the concept of a "Platonic Monster", as yet another thing for our favorite sages to debate and argue over. (e.g., "What are the characteristics of the Platonic Monster?")

However, I realized that later editions of D&D actually *did* sort of move toward a system where monsters got organized by Platonic(ish) ideals. 3.X divided by types such as Aberrations, Dragons, Humanoids, Undead, etc. 4e sorts them out by roles (Skirmisher, Controller, Brute, Artillery, etc.). These divisions have *mechanical effects*.

That means our sages could actually deduce things correctly if they sorted out the correct Platonic Ideals of monsters. Which is... a very interesting idea for the "Adventuring Sages of the Greyhawk Pedant's Symposium" campaign concept.

JRM

04-08-2009 03:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10211120)

One of the Monsters featured on the 1st Edition Monster Manual is a Roper hanging from the ceiling of a cavern menacing an Owlbear.

Yes, I realized it was just my fading memory, since I've read both editions of the AD&D MM so many times, but just found it curious. For some reason I remembered the Roper & Owlbear on the 1E cover, but not that the roper was inverted. Funny how your memory works, eh. I guess the MM entry illustrations of a 'stalagmite-type' Roper are what imprinted me with a particular vision of the monster.

Incidentally, the 2E illustration makes a Roper look even more like a Yochlol than the 1E picture did.

That raises another of D&D's weird little questions - is there a reason Lolth's demon handmaidens look like small, slimy Ropers who can turn into beautiful drow elfmaids? Well both Ropers and Drow share the same habitat, so maybe the dark elves think all (or many) of the underworlds perils are tests sent by their goddess and started associating the Roper with her - after all, they've got six sticky strands like her sacred tentacle-staff, are exceptionally intelligent, very magic-resistant and are similar in philosophy (CE). Hmm, maybe some Ropers were even converted to the worship of Lolth? It wouldn't be too much of a leap to guess then demonic psychomutation resulted in a strain of demons that resembled Ropers - or maybe Yochlol are just formed from the demonic spirits of dead Ropers, who chose to throw in with Lolth in her early days as a Demon Lady so have a chosen spot in her hierarchy?

Sleeper

04-08-2009 04:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10212874)

That raises another of D&D's weird little questions - is there a reason Lolth's demon handmaidens look like small, slimy Ropers who can turn into beautiful drow elfmaids?

In the lands of Undermollusca, the illithid need servants who can go abroad in the lands of the sun, and kidnap and assassinate and otherwise extend their tentacles (arms) across the green lands they so desire, and so fear. They tried breeding mimics. They tried modifying their own pregnant feet, that which the warmlanders call tadpoles. They failed so many times. At least the grimlocks were modestly useful. As a barrier, when set free to roam the Fringe. As the occasional wave of shock troops. But spies? Not hardly. The fungus growing in their brains may be surprisingly sensitive to changes in air pressure, but the same fungus slowly consumes the brain, making them ever more stupid, and ever more wild.

But then, they discovered something curious. The breed of human called elves shared some unusual traits. A lifespan an order of magnitude greater than the more numerous humans and goblins. And they aged gracefully, without the crooked backs, lined faces, paper-like skin, and twig-like bones. Elves merely grew more fixed, less flexible. Sterner, with more responsibilities. But the face of an elder and the face of the face of the youth were equally resilient, perfect. Elves merely appeared to age, slowly, because they lost the joy and carefree smiles of youth. Smile, and you look young; frown, and your face wrinkles and appears old. The elderly elves were older, but only truly in their minds. Their bodies remained untouched. The appearance of age were just that; it solely resided in the eyes, in the carriage, in the expressions. Their physical bodies were untouched. Which made them the ideal host.

In a remote land, a volcano erupted. Dust settled on a forest, smothering it. Yet when the nearby humans sent delegations to the elven nation to offer aid, they found it empty. The animals fled or dying, and the elves? Simply gone. The illithid had their specimens.

Thousands of flayed and cast-aside experiments later, they perfected the process. They opened up the remaining elves, and removed... well, everything. All they really wanted was the facade. Into this husk, like a snail into its shell, they grafted a special breed of mimic. Their skins merged in some fashion, and they became one. The experiment was successful. The only real side effects appeared manageable. The first was a change in coloration, hardly noticeable to the dark-dwelling molluscs. They didn't even realize this at first, though it would later become a problem. The illithid simply didn't under the surface elven predilection toward racist xenophobia.

The second side effect was a type of sport. Sometimes, the graft didn't quite work. The resulting merger partially failed; the faux-elf parts tried to reject its new symbiote, and extruded a portion of it as a mass. Usually this erupted from the lower portion of the body, a bulbous and glistening thing protruding from the bottom of the torso. From this mass tendrils tried to extend in various directions, until the dark elf skin covering them hardened and froze. These sports were still functional, but obviously not suited as spies. Since they appeared somewhat spider-like, they illithid created a myth about a test, and divine retribution.

And sometimes the graft worked spectacularly well. Beyond expectations. A perfect merger of mimic and hollowed-out elf. The two skins became one, became both morphic and fixed. Able to assume the form of an elf, or revert back to their natural state as a slug-like mimic, with the trapping tendrils common among the class that also spawned the roper. The illithid meme-engine took this fact, and around the kernel further developed the myth. The same divinity that punished the spider-like ones, also had need of handmaidens. Her chosen ones, her servants.

The mythology was built around this duality; the everchanging yochol were blessed; the fixed drider were cursed.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Rust Monster

Here it is folks: out of all D&D monsters in history, this is the most controversial of them all. Remember the great and legendary flame wars at 4e's release, the ill-thought criticisms spoken by Mike Mearls, the gargantuan eruption of nerd rage? Those were the days.

You all know what Rust Monsters are. Quadrapedal insectoid things that are 'placid by nature' but are driven mad by the scent of their favourite food - metal. Which they then do their damnest to devour. Interestingly and perhaps a little strangely, the way around this is clearly telegraphed to the players in the entry, as it explicitly notes that the creatures give up a fight to eat dropped metal objects like iron spikes. Admittedly this is pretty obvious, but I never thought of doing it when I was a kid.

Archetypal Rust Monsters only go for 'ferrous' metals such as iron, steel, mithril and adamantite. Clearly, what the world needs is subspecies who prefer gold, silver, copper, platinum etc. Or, how about a variant so sensitive and so ravenous that it will *suck iron out of the blood*?

MadWriter

04-08-2009 07:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Rust Monster

Here it is folks: out of all D&D monsters in history, this is the most controversial of them all. Remember the great and legendary flame wars at 4e's release, the ill-thought criticisms spoken by Mike Mearls, the gargantuan eruption of nerd rage? Those were the days.

You all know what Rust Monsters are. Quadrapedal insectoid things that are 'placid by nature' but are driven mad by the scent of their favourite food - metal. Which they then do their damnest to devour. Interestingly and perhaps a little strangely, the way around this is clearly telegraphed to the players in the entry, as it explicitly notes that the creatures give up a fight to eat dropped metal objects like iron spikes. Admittedly this is pretty obvious, but I never thought of doing it when I was a kid.

Archetypal Rust Monsters only go for 'ferrous' metals such as iron, steel, mithril and adamantite. Clearly, what the world needs is subspecies who prefer gold, silver, copper, platinum etc. Or, how about a variant so sensitive and so ravenous that it will suck iron out of the blood?

Sheez, Noisms, remind me not to play in any of your tabletop games--on-line or off. You get 1 Nasty GM point from me.

Inyssius

04-08-2009 07:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Stop moving so fast! We don't have that many monsters left!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10213302)

Rust Monster

Here it is folks: out of all D&D monsters in history, this is the most controversial of them all. Remember the great and legendary flame wars at 4e's release, the ill-thought criticisms spoken by Mike Mearls, the gargantuan eruption of nerd rage? Those were the days.

Heh. I think it's worth mentioning that, as of now, the rust monster is *baaaaack!*

And yes. As if you were wondering, there *was* another gargantuan eruption of nerd rage when that came out.

EDIT: Oh, and the art for it? In 4e? Is **great**.

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/intheworks_mm2_6.jpg

noisms

04-08-2009 08:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10213407)

Stop moving so fast! We don't have that many monsters left!

Heh. I think it's worth mentioning that, as of now, the rust monster is baaaaack!

And yes. As if you were wondering, there was another gargantuan eruption of nerd rage when that came out.

I am at this moment biting my lip and preventing my own nerd rage spewing forth after looking at that statblock... I have to go and punch something now. ;)

Hellzon

04-08-2009 08:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10213407)

EDIT: Oh, and the art for it? In 4e? Is **great**.

They managed to make the propeller-tail not look totally silly. Good job. :)

The 3E illustration isn't bad either.

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/MM...MM35_PG216.jpg

Though this is my favourite. It looks so sad:

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/designdev_rustdmg.jpg

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms, RBDM Extraordinaire

Or, how about a variant so sensitive and so ravenous that it will suck iron out of the blood?

Vampiric Rust monsters? I approve. Maybe add the Celestial template too...

(This post should not be taken as endorsement or disapproval of rust monsters. Whatever floats your boat.)

EmperorSeth

04-09-2009 01:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10212259)

*Okay, **Sleeper's** mollusc underworld is creepily evocative. Good show.*

I was also quite liking the concept of a "Platonic Monster", as yet another thing for our favorite sages to debate and argue over. (e.g., "What are the characteristics of the Platonic Monster?")

Oh, you know. They value you as a person, but they don't see the chemistry there, and they don't want to risk losing a friendship by the prospect of dating.

demiurge1138

04-09-2009 03:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10213499)

I am at this moment biting my lip and preventing my own nerd rage spewing forth after looking at that statblock... I have to go and punch something now. ;)

See, the thing about 4e rust monsters is... they're their own economic force. Think about it. If you get residuum (magic-item-crafting-stuff) equal to the value of the magic item it ate out of one, they're much more cost effective than selling unwanted magic items, due to the 4e world's unstable "sell for 1/5 buy price" economy.

Assuming they know someone who can use Ritual Casting to make magic items, all adventurers should keep small rust monster farms. Upkeep wouldn't be expensive--they can be fed scraps of metal, the mundane weapons and armor of various foes. And once a particularly expensive-but-useless magic item fell into the adventurer's hands, he'd feed it to one of his rust monsters, slaughter it, and harvest its sweet, sweet residuum gland.

Almost as good as slaad farming! (Remind me to mention that again once we're on slaads).

6inTruder

04-09-2009 11:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hey, for everyone who's been interested in that 'Sages travel the globe investigating crazy monsters' game... [Elfworld](#). Specifically the last story, about an illustrator looking to get a look at a basalisk for his big book of monsters.

Sleeper

04-09-2009 02:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10215163)

Assuming they know someone who can use Ritual Casting to make magic items, all adventurers should keep small rust monster farms.

I rather like that. Turn rust monsters from random terrors into domesticated beasts. Perhaps a little ornery, but mule-kicking or camel-spitting ornery, not lion ornery.

The rust monster ranches would also serve as a strategic asset. When besieging an enemy, have apprentice mages cast *feather fall* on the friskier specimens, and fling them over the castle walls with trebuchets. They alight in the courtyard, their feathered antennae questing, seeking, and then scuttle toward the barracks, or chase the sentries along the walls. In a great melee, have whip- and wooden club- wielding leather armored handlers herd them towards the lines of massed heavy infantry. In response, every good-sized unit would have its own anti-rust monster specialists.

Which justifies nationalizing the trade. Not that medieval societies need much justification. Probably one of the King's the monopolies, like the mint. Raised on heavily guarded ranches, perhaps stockades like the Alamo. The monopoly is granted to a wealthy and influential family that just happens to be prone to mania, and delusions of grandeur. Flamboyant peacocks like Custer. Or perhaps it is ceded to the church; monks and nuns at secluded abbeys and monasteries specialize in the taming of the red beast. They might even have martial D&D-style monks, who discipline the beasts with their hands and fists, and serve as conscripts when the church deems the cause worthy. After all, who better to herd rust monsters than those who eschew all armor and weapons?

demiurge1138

04-09-2009 04:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've always been a fan of the idea of rust monster suicide squads, the bravest (and craziest) of the dwarven armies--clad in leather and clutching stone-headed morningstars--perched on the back of rust monsters driven to mania by the smell of so many delicious spearheads and suits of chain. Few of these dwarven rust-boys ever return from one of their

missions, charging full-on into the orcish horde... but those that do win the respect of all dwarfkind.

Oh, and...

Quote:

Originally Posted by ESkemp (Post 10193627)

I'm just surprised the two-headed roc isn't a staple of the D&D roc. I know the game's had its fair share of designers who are also aficionados of Harryhausen movies.

[Speak of the devil](#). Paizo's putting a two-headed roc (spelled the Persian way for authenticity) into their latest adventure path.

randomgamer8466

04-10-2009 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'm not into the idea of rust monsters who are out to suck your blood. Think about it: How many D&D monsters eat your metal items? One. How many want to suck your blood? Like fifty. Making rust monsters into blood drinkers makes them less unique, not more so.

UNLESS your party is so jaded with D&D tropes that you're just trying to throw something off the wall at them.

I'm no biochemist, but I believe the iron in human blood is already oxidized and therefore could not be turned into rust.

HaplessVictim

04-10-2009 01:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10210743)

Ropers reproduce asexually by shedding some of their material in the form of a seed. Drawing nutrients from the cavern floor (and perhaps siphoning magical energies from deep within the earth), the infant roper grows to maturity in 2d4 weeks. Until that time has passed, the roper is indistinguishable from a boulder.

Yet another mission to add to the Egg Thief Quest. Roper "seeds" are not technically an egg, I know -- they're more like a hydrozoan bud -- but close enough for the unscrupulous rouges and merciless sages that ply the trade. Now it would be bad news, of course, if these seeds happened to hatch during transport..

And let's not neglect Roc eggs: 1d4+1 eggs per nest, which sell for r 2d6 x 100 gp. Presumably, transporting these eggs is a bit of a hassle; looking at the illustration, they'd be the size of an elephant.

HaplessVictim

04-10-2009 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10213302)

Rust Monster

Here it is folks: out of all D&D monsters in history, this is the most controversial of them all. Remember the great and legendary flame wars at 4e's release, the ill-thought criticisms spoken by Mike Mearls, the gargantuan eruption of nerd rage? Those were the days.

I haven't picked up any 4e books, and have paid no attention to chatter about it. Could you summarize this for the ignorant masses (me)? I love hearing about a good nerd rage.

ESkemp

04-10-2009 01:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10217685)

Speak of the devil. Paizo's putting a two-headed roc (spelled the Persian way for authenticity) into their latest adventure path.

Oh, excellent! Good for them.

JRM

04-10-2009 05:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10213302)

Rust Monster *Archetypal Rust Monsters only go for 'ferrous' metals such as iron, steel, mithril and adamantite. Clearly, what the world needs is subspecies who prefer gold, silver, copper, platinum etc. Or, how about a variant so sensitive and so ravenous that it will suck iron out of the blood?*

Well for a gold-eating monster there's always the aurumovorax.

JRM

04-10-2009 05:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10213302)

Rust Monster

Well for a gold-eating monster there's always the aurumovorax.

Anyhow, there's quite a lot to say about Rust Monsters. To begin with, although they prefer refined metal they will eat metal ore, which implies they do not need to rely on their rusting-process (however that works) as a source of energy, since metal ores are almost always fully oxidized. So, can they eat other stuff as well as metal to supplement their energy intake or do they absorb ambient heat or magic - maybe that propeller tail is actually an energy collector?

That big tail prop is probably for something, after all - maybe its an energy-collector, or a display device, a sense organ? Perhaps its a vestige of an organ used by the Rust Monsters' young? Perhaps they have swimming larvae with tail-gills like mayflies? Or it literally *is* a propeller, and Rust Monsters produce thousands of tiny fry that disperse through the air like windblown seeds, twirling their feathery tails to propel themselves, then shedding most of their tail-prop when they land.

Although those theories are contradicted by the MM, which says a pair of Rust Monsters will occasionally be encountered with a single half-grown young.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10215163)

Assuming they know someone who can use Ritual Casting to make magic items, all adventurers should keep small rust monster farms. Upkeep wouldn't be expensive--they can be fed scraps of metal, the mundane weapons and armor of various foes. And once a particularly expensive-but-useless magic item fell into the adventurer's hands, he'd feed it to one of his rust monsters, slaughter it, and harvest its sweet, sweet residuum gland.

Even in world without residuum Rust Monster farming may be commercially viable. They're probably full of all kinds of substances of use to alchemists. Furthermore, a Rust Monster presumably has a high metal content, and may well be equal to or better than most metal ores. So there could be an industry based on feeding Rust Monsters low-grade ore, then when the Monsters have concentrated the metal in their bodies the Miner-Farmers can slaughter them and melt down their bodies in a furnace to extract the metal, it may be an efficient way of processing poor quality deposits.

Plus, of course, the miners could use trained Rust Monsters to help them prospect for new veins of ore.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10217451)

I rather like that. Turn rust monsters from random terrors into domesticated beasts. Perhaps a little ornery, but mule kicking or camel-spitting ornery, not lion ornery.

The rust monster ranches would also serve as a strategic asset.

SNIP

They might even have martial D&D-style monks, who discipline the beasts with their hands and fists, and serve as conscripts when the church deems the cause worthy. After all, who better to herd rust monsters than those who eschew all armor and weapons?

I like the Monks of the Rust Monster idea. It's a natural evolution of how the monks and magic-users used to take over the melee when facing one of these beasts.

I believe people have been using Rust Monsters in AD&D that way for a long time, on both sides of the screen. I've seen a good few scenarios where intelligent foes have trained or captive Rust Monsters to soften up their enemies. (Including one where they'd fed one of them on pitchblend, resulting in a *radioactive* rust monster!) It works better if the creatures involved don't rely on metal equipment, obviously - imagine a band of marauding trolls accompanied by their pet Rust Monsters and Disenchanters - all they need is a pet monster that 'eats' fire and acid, and they'd have little to fear from most human & demi-human opponents.

There is another obvious tactical use for Rust Monsters, they're ideal for dealing with those nasty Iron Golems, Shield Guardians and similar constructs. With a potent enough wizard on the team, it isn't even necessary to bring the Monster to the party. Simply carry a couple of live mice, then if the party needs a Rust Monster the wizard tosses a mouse on the floor, a quick *polymorph othercasting* and Presto! instant Rust Monster.

Sleeper

04-10-2009 06:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10220394)

Or it literally is a propeller, and Rust Monsters produce thousands of tiny fry that disperse through the air like windblown seeds, twirling their feathery tails to propel themselves, then shedding most of their tail-prop when they land.

Maybe they're giant mites, and like certain mites rust monsters use a form of ballooning to travel through the air. The spinnerets might atrophy in adults, but immature specimens could extrude a line of silk that builds and waves in the breeze, until the wind pulls them away from the bush on which the eggmass was laid.

If the young have fully developed antennae and the ability to sense ferrous materials, this could be nasty. They might float through the air on their silk kites until they sense a mass of iron below them, and then snip the thread and drop. A wind-blown fog of baby rust monsters that happened to drift over one of the lumbering ironclad ships used by the dwarves for river defense could be catastrophic, as a rain of tiny rust-makers plummets toward the vessel and destroys everything above the waterline.

JRM

04-10-2009 06:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10220483)

Maybe they're giant mites, and like certain mites rust monsters use a form of ballooning to travel through the air. The spinnerets might atrophy in adults, but immature specimens could extrude a line of silk that builds and waves in the breeze, until the wind pulls them away from the bush on which the eggmass was laid.

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That was more or less my thinking, including it raining Rust Monsters!:D Ballooning arachnids was one of the inspirations for the idea, together with sycamore seeds. I do like the idea of the windblown Rust Monster Fry being able to spin their tail-tip propellers to give them an extra bit of lift or thrust. There are species of bacteria which have biological rotary engines, albeit on a far smaller scale.

Sleeper

04-10-2009 06:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10220567)

That was more or less my thinking, including it raining Rust Monsters!:D Ballooning arachnids was one of the inspirations for the idea, together with sycamore seeds. I do like the idea of the windblown Rust Monster Fry being able to spin their tail-tip propellers to give them an extra bit of lift or thrust. There are species of bacteria which have biological rotary engines, albeit on a far smaller scale.

If the propellers were proportionately larger in young rust monsters than in the mature ones, they could work like the helicopter seeds of maple trees. They drift in the wind on their kite, then snip the thread when they sense a certain amount of iron below. Then they use the forced rotation of their propellers to slow their fall, and perhaps even control the angle of descent until they land on the desired target.

6inTruder

04-10-2009 07:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

started wondering... How Warforged feel about the rust monster?

demiurge1138

04-10-2009 07:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

As much as I enjoy the mental image of airborne rusting swarms, and the lamentations of the players that such would cause, the fact that rust monsters are generally subterranean makes airborne dispersal somewhat unlikely. Water-borne dispersal, on the other hand, makes sense--there's a lot of underground rivers and lakes, and the tail-fin could be a paddle.

Water-borne dispersal also helps answer a question posed to me by my mother, of all people--if rust monsters are so dangerous to metal, why haven't they been exterminated yet by metal-using cultures? Sure, there might be specialized rust-catchers, using clubs and woven nets and poisonous gasses, but most terrestrial people don't think to look underwater. Perhaps the rust-catchers kill most of the rust monsters and bring in the biggest to be tamed for the rust farms, little knowing the jelly-like mass of eggs sitting in that inconspicuous pool of water. Maybe settlements downstream of rust farms are plagued by rust monster larvae emerging from the river, metamorphosing in an out-of-the-way area, then moving to civilization for a ferrous feast.

demiurge1138

04-10-2009 07:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10220717)
started wondering... How Warforged feel about the rust monster?

How would you feel about a guy running around with a super-soaker full of hydrochloric acid? Rust monsters are anathema to warforged, and many warforged probably have an extreme fear of such beasts. No doubt, a rust monster loose in one of House Cannith's creation forges during the Last War would be a huge waste of warforged life and Cannith profits--such beasts might be unleashed by a military to stop a shipment of warforged to one of their enemies, but doing so (and getting caught) would mean that dealings with the House would be jeopardized. More likely would be rust monsters smuggled in by radical druidic sects or anti-construct racists, hoping to discourage House Cannith from making more warforged altogether.

Sleeper

04-10-2009 07:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10220728)
As much as I enjoy the mental image of airborne rusting swarms, and the lamentations of the players that such would cause, the fact that rust monsters are generally subterranean makes airborne dispersal somewhat unlikely.

Airborne dispersal actually makes a lot of sense, if one standard assumption is overturned. The Underdark of late 1E AD&D was based on a network of interconnected tunnels. A dark elf could wander from one end of the continent to the other without every seeing the surface. But it's quite possible to have extensive dungeons and caves that are more like Earth's. Caves that are isolated, dungeons that are connected to nothing but a couple dozen, or a couple hundred, rooms and tunnels and passages and caverns. In this case, it makes sense that underworld fauna would develop the ability to widen their breeding pool and spread their genetic material across multiple dungeons. Some species might kick their adolescent young out of the nest into the upper world, where they scramble until they find a new hole to hide in. And perhaps pust monsters pregnant with eggjelly feel compelled to find the surface, and make a quick dash to a nearby bush. The kids born from those eggs then spread far and wide, across the sky. Most die, because they don't find a suitable habitat. But a few drift over another cave complex, or another dungeon, or a sewer system, and find a new home. And the genetic vitality of the species is preserved. This also makes sense if travel between different underground is just difficult, which is the Underdark default in any case.

The water dispersal idea is a good one, too. I haven't quite figured it out, but I'm thinking the tails serve as a kind of walk-walking aid. Instead of a cloud of mini-rusters, you have a film of iron-banes skeetering across the water towards the party courtesy of surface tension and little propellers.

JRM

04-10-2009 08:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10220587)

If the propellers were proportionately larger in young rust monsters than in the mature ones, they could work like the helicopter seeds of maple trees. They drift in the wind on their kite, then snip the thread when they sense a certain amount of iron below. Then they use the forced rotation of their propellers to slow their fall, and perhaps even control the angle of descent until they land on the desired target.

That's how the sycamore seed I referred to earlier works, the sycamore in question being *Acer pseudoplatanus*.

JRM

04-10-2009 09:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10220728)

As much as I enjoy the mental image of airborne rusting swarms, and the lamentations of the players that such would cause, the fact that rust monsters are generally subterranean makes airborne dispersal somewhat unlikely. Water-borne dispersal, on the other hand, makes sense--there's a lot of underground rivers and lakes, and the tail-fins could be a paddle.

Well I was just throwing out ideas to see what fits, and the idea of aerial larva attracted more of a response than the aquatic variant, where the propeller acts as fins-and-gills.

Although this is the underdark we're talking about, it probably has powerful subterranean winds due to various geomagical forces beyond earthly physics. There has to be something circulating the air down there and keeping it breathable for surface folks, otherwise they won't be able to delve into the depth to be killed by things or take their stuff.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10220728)

Water-borne dispersal also helps answer a question posed to me by my mother, of all people--if rust monsters are so dangerous to metal, why haven't they been exterminated yet by metal-using cultures? Sure, there might be specialized rust-catchers, using clubs and woven nets and poisonous gasses, but most terrestrial people don't think to look underwater. Perhaps the rust-catchers kill most of the rust monsters and bring in the biggest to be tamed for their rust farms, little knowing the jelly-like mass of eggs sitting in that inconspicuous pool of water. Maybe settlements downstream of rust farms are plagued by rust monster larvae emerging from the river, metamorphosing in an out-of-the-way area, then moving to civilization for a ferrous feast.

Well AD&D societies have a lot of other creatures that threaten them. Rust Monsters are a minor nuisance compared to some of the other dangers which would presumably receive more attention - they have to be

especially alert for all those rapidly multiplying monsters that could grow to plague proportions within weeks, such as some Undead. When you've got Ghouls and Sons of Kyuss to deal with, a silly-looking creature that any peasant can deal with by breaking out a club isn't going to receive much priority.

demiurge1138

04-10-2009 09:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Ghouls, nothing. It's wights you have to be worried about. You get killed by a wight--and that's as easy as one punch for most of the population--you got another wight in 1d4 *rounds*. Ghoul fever takes a few days.

Aerial dispersal would work--I just thought water dispersal might be more practical. I will say that the mental image of a female rust monster, gravid with rustlings, emerging onto a mountaintop to see the sun for the first time... and explode, seeding the air with aerial larvae.

On a major tangent, thinking about metal vs. wood... where do dwarves get their wood? I mean, they live underground, or in desolate areas like mountains, cliff faces and canyon walls. They have access to all the gems, precious metals and usable ores that they could ever hope for... but they still need fuel for the fires to make those metals worth something, and all of the dwarven weapons (axes, picks, hammers, crossbows) require wood to operate. Fuel can be taken care of, to a certain extent--dwarves probably have discovered coal, petroleum and/or natural gas.

So the dwarves would have to trade for their wood, for gems and metals and gold (the dwarves would also, of course, want to trade for preserved meats and cereals for bread and beer--most dwarf crops would be root veggies and fungus). Dwarves aren't obsessed with gold and gems... they're obsessed with the wood such trinkets can buy. A dwarf would consider especially fragrant or sturdy woods the same way a human would prize rubies or silver. And this would explain why dwarf/elf relations are always so frosty. Everytime a dwarf sees a forest, he wants to cut it down for its precious wood.

Sleeper

04-10-2009 10:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10221028)

*That's how the sycamore seed I referred to earlier works, the sycamore in question being **Acer pseudoplatanus**.*

Which is a species of the maple...

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)

I will say that the mental image of a female rust monster, gravid with rustlings, emerging onto a mountaintop to see the sun for the first time... and explode, seeding the air with aerial larvae.

Love that.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)

On a major tangent, thinking about metal vs. wood... where do dwarves get their wood? I mean, they live underground, or in desolate areas like mountains, cliff faces and canyon walls. They have access to all the gems, precious metals and usable ores that they could ever hope for... but they still need fuel for the fires to make those metals worth something, and all of the dwarven weapons (axes, picks, hammers, crossbows) require wood to operate. Fuel can be taken care of, to a certain extent--dwarves probably have discovered coal, petroleum and/or natural gas.

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I always preferred the idea that dwarves were residents of the highlands. Not Tolkienesque kings of Moriaesque caverns. Highlanders. Sheep herders. Goat rustlers. Some terraced farms. Sure they mine. And they smelt. And like the swords of Damascus, their steelwork, particularly armor, is world-renown. But living underground? Nonsense. Just a rumor. There's this problem with waste. With air circulation. But an even bigger problem is what do they eat? Without photosynthesis, there's no basis for an energy-rich ecology. And I don't really want my fantasy dwarves to live on some magical fungus that lives and grows in magical abundance. That's for the fey. The brownies. The elves, under their elf hills. The gnomes. Not the stolid, pragmatic dwarves.

No, I want the dwarves hunting in the woods, testing their bravery by standing solid in front of a charging boar with only a spear in their hands. They aren't skilled with horses because the only horses that range in the highlands are small, sturdy, and almost woolly. Good for pulling a bellows, or an anvil, or a wagon full of rutabegas. The Scottish accent can go. But the internectine clan warfare? The huge-ass weapons, whether claymore or a kind of giant glaive? Selling themselves out as mercenaries across the continent? The parochial xenophobia? Those can definitely stay.

Sure, they have a few underground fortresses. But they're fortifications not cities. Outposts, strongholds. In a world where monsters and mages fly, castles are *passee* except as palaces or other impractical structures built purely for aesthetic reasons. No, the medieval fantasy version of a castle is closer to a bunker or a bomb shelter. NORAD, under in Cheyenne Mountain. Tunnels, restricted access. No civilians. These structures are built purely for defense.

Towns and even cities may spring up around the Queen's undercastle built into the face of the outcropping. But most dwarves live outside, in huts or country estates, in ramshackle tenements or wood and beam houses faced with stucco. Cobblestone streets, sharp night air. Fir and pine needles underfoot.

That pretty much destroys the concept of the Underdark, but the Underdark is overexposed, anyway. Throwing out the cliches and using something new isn't a bad thing.

JRM

04-10-2009 05:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)

Ghouls, nothing. It's wights you have to be worried about. You get killed by a wight--and that's as easy as one punch

for most of the population--you got another wight in 1d4 rounds. Ghoul fever takes a few days.

I only mentioned a couple of the weakest undead as were the problem started. The higher grade versions would obviously be even nastier. Not only can a wight autoslay a 1st level character with one punch, even the half-strength ones have twice the Hit Dice of a 1st level character and immunity to normal weapons. It just gets worse as they grow tougher. Many of the higher-rank Undead can walk through walls (Wraiths, Spectres) or at least seep through cracks (*gaseous form* Vampires), so the poor peasants can't even lock themselves inside their houses. No wonder they're so keen on priests and temples.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)

Aerial dispersal would work--I just thought water dispersal might be more practical. I will say that the mental image of a female rust monster, gravid with rustlings, emerging onto a mountaintop to see the sun for the first time... and explode, seeding the air with aerial larvae.

That I like - the Puffball Rust Monster. Imagine if a party encounters one just about to pop and kill it, they'd be terrified it was some Rust-Monster analogue of a Gas Spore and they were all going to die and spout baby Pseudo-Rust Monsters. Then they'd notice the rust holes in their metal equipment with the tiny insects chewing away inside.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)

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I'm with Sleeper here, I don't imagine Dwarves as living in desolate areas, but in mountains mostly covered in conifer trees, with intensely cultivated terraced farms near their dwarf-holds. I think of them as having a lifestyles comparable to people who live in mountain areas like the Alps or the Andes.

That's for 'regular dwarves' though, in my campaign I've also got Svartalf-style Fey Dwarves who live in magical underground grottos with all the mushrooms and subterranean wonders you'd imagine, but they're few and far between.

JRM

04-10-2009 05:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10221271)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10221028)

*That's how the sycamore seed I referred to earlier works, the sycamore in question being **Acer pseudoplatanus**.*

Which is a species of the maple...

I know, I was just trying to say we're talking about the same genus of tree, hence the *Acer* ("Maple"). Guess I should have made it clearer by saying Sycamore Maple, but over here we just call them sycamores.

Wakboth

04-10-2009 08:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by HaplessVictim (Post 10219353)

I haven't picked up any 4e books, and have paid no attention to chatter about it. Could you summarize this for the ignorant masses (me)? I love hearing about a good nerd rage.

IIRC, the thing is that DMs love rust monsters, and players hate them (generalisations!). And in a game which puts lots of value on magical equipment, and attempts to maintain at least some kind of a balance, having your (very expensive and very useful) magic weapons and armor reduced to rust by what is essentially a nuisance encounter is problematic. (Although they aren't anywhere the sort of "gotcha!" monsters as, say, disenchanters...)

Mearls' rust monster re-design for 3.5 (featured on the Wizards' site somewhere) changed the way the rust monster works, IIRC they caused temporary penalties to metallic equipment which went away after a while. Cue nerdrage, with people complaining about changing the sacred rust monster, people complaining about how unrealistic the new system is (hah!), people thinking Mearls was molly-coddling players, people thinking that rust monsters should be banned for good, and so on. :D

Me, I rationalized it quite simply: since rust monsters can eat more than just iron (at least in BECM1, they quite happily consumed coins and stuff), whatever they do to the metal can't be rusting it, exactly. So, maybe they magically soften the metal, then gnaw it away at leisure if allowed to do so... and if you run away or kill the rust monster, your armor and weapons eventually return to their usual consistency, maybe looking pitted and stained but otherwise fine.

Also: rust monster is one of the very few critters whose art has universally improved with every new edition. :)

JRM

04-10-2009 11:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10222592)

IIRC, the thing is that DMs love rust monsters, and players hate them (generalisations!). And in a game which puts lots of value on magical equipment, and attempts to maintain at least some kind of a balance, having your (very expensive and very useful) magic weapons and armor reduced to rust by what is essentially a nuisance encounter is problematic. (Although they aren't anywhere the sort of "gotcha!" monsters as, say, disenchanters...)

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Also: rust monster is one of the very few critters whose art has universally improved with every new edition. :)

Pah! I disagree entirely...

...everyone with any taste knows the Dave Sutherland version is the One True Rust Monster. :)

Ahem

As for the 'it just temporarily soften the metal', I thought about using that rationalisation but surely if it makes a sword soft enough for the Rust Monster to chew like a cheese baguette the metal weapons would get seriously damaged if you wield them when softened? A Rust Monster doesn't have a powerful bite - they don't even have a bite attack in most editions of D&D - so a 'temporarily rust softened' weapon could be so weak it is bent or broken by the force of a blow.

I would prefer to make a Rust Monster's rusting attack only work on non-magical metal - so the player don't have to worry about it destroying their beloved +3 *sword of goblinhewing* and the DM doesn't have to worry about their players using them to slaughter Iron Golem.

Or, have it do a small amount of damage to a metal object per hit, rather than the "one hit rusting" it has in AD&D, so the Rust Monster would need to hit a sword, say, 2-3 times to render it useless, plus once per magical plus, and then say the magical rusting can be reversed with a *mending* spell.

Either solution puts them back to being low-level nuisance monsters.

Now the funny thing is I've never used a Rust Monster as a DM. Even when the PCs tried to use the '*polymorph mouse to rust monster*' tactic against The Terrible Iron Golem they lost initiative and the golem stepped on the mouse while advancing to slaughter the party again. (Its lucky that *raise dead* and *stone to flesh* exist in AD&D, I think that golem must have killed the PCs 3-4 times apiece via its poisonous sword and petrifying whip.)

Kakita Kojiro

04-11-2009 02:04 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10222592)

Mearls' rust monster re-design for 3.5 (featured on the Wizards' site somewhere)

It was in a [Design & Development article](#).

Go ahead. Give in to your nerdrage. With each passing moment you make yourself more a servant of the Dark Side. :D

JRM

04-11-2009 05:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10223579)

Go ahead. Give in to your nerdrage. With each passing moment you make yourself more a servant of the Dark Side. :D

Now I'm imagining the Emperor DMing a D&D session for Darths Vader, Maul and Tyrannus. Boy, wouldn't that be a great game.

Off course, they'd all be using Force-manipulation to cheat on the dice rolls.:D

noisms

04-12-2009 11:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sahuagin are coming up. I've had a busy weekend.

Mikaze

04-13-2009 08:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I always thought the rust monster was cute. Genuinely cute too, rather than ugly-cute.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sahuagin

We've discussed these before in some detail, I think at the Aquatic Elf entry, and if I remember correctly sombreros and cigars somehow came into the equation. Sahuagins, as any fule kno, are a kind of humanoid shark-thing which hunt in packs and try to kill basically anything they come across. Really, just an aquatic orc by any other name. As with all aquatic monsters in the MM you have to feel that Sahuagin won't ever reach their full potential because, really, how many campaigns revolve around the sea? At most my guess is that they tend to appear simply as raiders in most games.

Points of particular interest:

- Sahuagin are ruled by a king whose domain "is divided into nine provices". I find this interesting. Does size of domain have no bearing on the number of provinces? And are all Sahuagin kingdoms set up this way? In which case, *why nine*?
- Sahuagin keep pet sharks and can train them to obey simple commands. This suggests that it's at least possible for human beings to do the same thing.
- They like to keep captives for torture and sport in special air-breathing chambers under the waves. I quite like this idea for the beginning of a campaign, *in media res*, where the players start off as captives who are just about to escape. What could follow would then be a bit like Apocalypso under the sea. I suppose to make it work properly the PCs would have to be members of an aquatic race, because it isn't easy to imagine human beings outwitting or outrunning sharks and shark-men underwater.
- Sahuagin are full-on Social Darwinists who eat their weaker members. Again that strange mixture of mythology and real world (sort of) science - in the next paragraph we have sages speculating that Sahuagin are "degenerate humans who formerly dwelt on the seacoasts, whose evil and depravity was so great that they eventually devolved into fish-folk and sought the darkness of the ocean depths."
- There's a strong Ixixachitl/Sahuagin rivalry going on down there underwater, presumably because, you know, evil races always do have rivalries. How did the rivalry start, though, and what over?
- "It is suggested that they were created from a nation of particularly evil humans by the most powerful lawful evil gods in order to preserve them when the great deluge came upon the earth." Great deluge? Eh? Forgive me, because I'm not in any way a setting buff, but what is this from?

demiurge1138

04-13-2009 12:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Well, as for the ixixachitl thing... sahuagin are Lawful Evil. Ixits are Chaotic Evil. Sekolah, the shark god of the sahuagin, is from Hell, whereas the ixits worship Demogorgon, Prince of Demons. The rivalry between the two species is a undersea parody of the great Blood War, with both races trying their best to prove their version of evil the superior one.

Of course, since both sahuagin and ixits are far less numerous and powerful than batezu and tanar'ri, their struggles are much more localized and not taken nearly so seriously. There's a lot more sniping on the sidelines and war profiteering by krakens, morkoths, deep-dwelling kuo toa and aboleths, and the whole thing is more likely to be derailed by good or neutral oceanic folk like the merpeople, aquatic elves or even the sentient super-whales of 2e.

That also means that things can get very much out of hand when one or both sides, drawing on their clerical traditions, starts summoning their fiendish inspiration to fight with them...

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

one thing I really like in 4ed is that Sahuagin worship an aspect of the Unaligned nature goddess.

Sleeper

04-13-2009 01:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10231732)

Well, as for the ixitxachitl thing... sahaugin are Lawful Evil. Ixits are Chaotic Evil. Sekolah, the shark god of the sahuagin, is from Hell, whereas the ixits worship Demogorgon, Prince of Demons. The rivalry between the two species is a undersea parody of the great Blood War, with both races trying their best to prove their version of evil th superior one.

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That also means that things can get very much out of hand when one or both sides, drawing on their clerical traditions, starts summoning their fiendish inspiration to fight with them...

Sekolah was always a weird fit in the Nine Hells. Lawful generally means following some kind of laws or rules. Structure, organized military, civilian rule of law, organization, even bureaucracy. At heart, civilization. Specifically, the lawful evil ideal of despotism. Yet Sekolah of the flip-flopping gender is basically a huge solitary predator under the ice of one of the Nine Hells who snipes the occasional careless devil and serves as the plane's ultimate bogeyman. Chaotic, or a form of primal atavistic neutral. The other version of law is rigidly following some kind of inner code. The monk-thing, or the knight-thing. (Heretically, the barbarian-thing, of which the chivalric code is just a variant.) But still, a solitary ravening beast. No code of honor except eat the weak, which doesn't really qualify.

I hate the idea of a pale shadow of the already anemic Blood War, but I love the idea of war profiteering. A great war, between the magic rays and the sharkfolk that sunders the seas. The sahuagin order and industry, pseudo-Roman legions, huge conquered slave cities where the merfolk and mer-elves slave away in mines and workshops. Great undersea dreadnoughts towed by krakens. Against their enemy, the scattered and diverse ixitxachitl. Formless, structureless, local groups or cults banding and disbanding in the wake of the most charismatic of the local leaders. Each group following their own patron or demon prince, mutilating or painting or tattooing themselves with bioluminescent strains in a thousand different patterns. An aging centralized bathic Rome, surrounded by the glowing darkness of innumerable tribes.

And both sides pledge and owe service not to gods per se, but to whatever being can grant them power. One side has chosen the inhuman forces of the demons, the other has chosen the corrupting forces of the devils, and they wage war through theurgy and sorcery as well as more physical skirmishes. The devils seek to corrupt and have weakened the sahuagin state with dissipation, excess, and madness; while the demons relish destruction and have urged more than one tribe on glorious but quixotic quests that bring vast suffering to the enemy, but cost an entire generation of youths or even the lives of the entire tribe. The petty inward-looking demons and devils can't see that they're weakening their greatest allies in the mortal world by their machinations.

The rest of the undersea realm is swept up in the wake of this great conflict, with tributary states and outright vassals, conquered nations and neutral powers. Morkoth spymasters selling their services from the center of a complex and mind-baffling web. Locathah arms merchants and moneychangers who skate the border between obscene profits, and their families being served as sushi. Heretical seaelves preaching a new religion of dolphins not sharks, who meet in secret and risk being tossed to the shark pens. Kraken generals and recruiters who weave the weather that cause the storms that sink the ships that supply contingents of lacedon berserkers. Aboleths overseers hired to mind the numerous slaves and living in strange slime-filled crystal domes. Currents are mapped, and sealanes are patrolled. Posts spring up. Even barbarian ixitxachitl and apostate sea elves are tolerated in the cosmopolitan cities, and can even vie to become Citizens, as long as they prove their loyalty. Hostage princes and princesses are traded between the ixitxachitl and sahuagin, and are raised as their own.

Mikelibrarian

04-13-2009 04:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10231492)

Sahuagin

Points of particular interest:

- Sahuagin are ruled by a king whose domain "is divided into nine provinces". I find this interesting. Does size of domain have no bearing on the number of provinces? And are all Sahuagin kingdoms set up this way? In which case, *why nine*?
- "It is suggested that they were created from a nation of particularly evil humans by the most powerful lawful evil gods in order to preserve them when the great deluge came upon the earth." Great deluge? Eh? Forgive me, because I'm not in any way a setting buff, but what is this from?

The 1st edition Monster Manual says that the king's domain is divided into nine provinces because they are devil worshippers who want their domains to resemble the nine hells. The lack of explanation in the second edition Sahuagin description is probably due to the diminishing of the role of devils in second edition.

I am guessing that the great deluge is probably a reference to Noah's flood that occurs in the Bible's Book of Genesis.

As for enmity between Sahuagin and Ixitxachitl the Wikipedia article for Sekolah says that he once enslaved Demogorgon through the use of an Artifact.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekolah>

Personally, I think they are enemies because they were both created for Blackmoor, and Dave Arneson felt that the two evil sea dwelling races should be enemies. One interesting thing is that while Ixitxachitl sounds like an Aztec name, one of the first Spaniards to report on the religious rituals of the Aztecs was a Franciscan monk named Bernardino de Sahagún.

Oh, and this is late, but I'm happy that the Phantom picture shows a chained man in a Roman Toga as one of the first ghost stories was a Roman account using a chained ghost. I'm sure that the 1815 translation was a great influence on Charles Dickens.

<http://tententwo.com/2008/10/31/a-roman-ghost-story/>

noisms

04-13-2009 04:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10232321)

The 1st edition Monster Manual says that the king's domain is divided into nine provinces because they are devil worshippers who want their domains to resemble the nine hells. The lack of explanation in the second edition Sahuagin description is probably due to the diminishing of the role of devils in second edition.

That would make sense. Thanks.

Quote:

I am guessing that the great deluge is probably a reference to Noah's flood that occurs in the Bible's Book of Genesi

Given that there are no other references to real-world Biblical events in the MM I find that a bit difficult to believe. I was expecting it to be from a timeline in Forgotten Realms or Dragonlance or somesuch, but not being an expert on the main D&D settings I'm not sure.

Wakboth

04-13-2009 08:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The DiTerlizzi illustration is characteristically excellent (although the sahuagin doesn't seem especially *shark*-like...) and has set their looks in 3e and 4e. Which is good, since IIRC the 1e pic was a very uninspired "crested, vaguely fishy guy with big round eyes".

Now, does anyone else remember a thread here about how the sahuagin - undersea shark-Nazis! - actually ruled most of the world? Krakens were too hard to go after in the abyssal depths, as were morkoths, and aquatic elves survived near river mouths where the salinity was too low for sahuagins' comfort, but otherwise they totally dominated the seas, occasionally sending raiding groups on dry land to harass the air-breathers for kicks. Bit like Predators, actually.

DMH

04-13-2009 08:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sea Devils was the best monster book for 2e. I thought "saw-hu-a-gen" were all right for gillmen but Ravenloft had the reaver which was more interesting as individuals. Then I read Sea Devils and now everytime I use saltwater, there are sahuagin somewhere. There is also a followup article for SD in Dragon 239 that has sahuagin technology. They are smarter than humans and their only weaknesses are bright light and fear of magic.

Are malenti listed here or under sea elves?

Vultur10

04-13-2009 08:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The sahuagin are based off of H. P. Lovecraft's Deep Ones -- the malenti, who can pass as aquatic elves, are the equivalent of the hybrids who could pass as human.

noisms

04-14-2009 01:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10232718)

Sea Devils was the best monster book for 2e. I thought "saw-hu-a-gen" were all right for gillmen but Ravenloft had the reaver which was more interesting as individuals. Then I read Sea Devils and now everytime I use saltwater, there are sahuagin somewhere. There is also a followup article for SD in Dragon 239 that has sahuagin technology. They are smarter than humans and their only weaknesses are bright light and fear of magic.

Are malenti listed here or under sea elves?

They're under sea elves. They're only hinted at in the Sahuagin entry (it says that Tritons suspect a linkage between the two races).

noisms

04-14-2009 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Vultur10 (Post 10232757)

The sahuagin are based off of H. P. Lovecraft's Deep Ones -- the malenti, who can pass as aquatic elves, are the equivalent of the hybrids who could pass as human.

In that case where are Father Dagon and Mother Hydra??? ;)

Sleeper

04-14-2009 03:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10233508)

In that case where are Father Dagon and Mother Hydra??? ;)

I believe Father Dragon was forced out of the church after less than appropriate conduct with a young piercer, and can now be found wandering the Underdark begging passersby for packets of myconid spores.

The Mother of Hydras ran into an epic wizard who turned her into into monster with a typical assortment of random traits usually attributed to sorcerous meddling (including fur, dull spikes, a beak, and an addiction to formic acid). She still lays eggs but her children, while definitely monstrous, are tiny and only a threat to less-than-giant-size insects. The current edition of *The Teratologists' Guide to the Planes* (revised, Year of the Platypus) now reflects this with a brief entry summarizing both her and her progeny: "mostly harmless".

YojimboC

04-14-2009 05:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

It should come as no surprise that I love Sahuagin. And it should come as no further surprise that I never get to use them.

Except once, as antagonists in a pirate campaign, where they did pretty much just play the role of raiders. It was fun. I set up things so that two rival pirate ships stopped off in a friendly port, with the plot hook dangled in front of them of a gang war in the city streets, when BAM! I hit them with a Sahuagin raid instead. Backed up by Sea Trolls for some variety. Man, that was a fun adventure.

Afterward, the players tried to go under the water to counter attack, but none of them had A) darkvision or 2) magical light, so the Sahuagin tunnels were pretty much impenetrable. The characters were smart enough to get some "breathe underwater juice," but once they got down there they were rather outclassed.

Sahuagin are plenty bad ass, but it's difficult to make use of them. There's so much more prep the characters have to do before going into a Sahuagin dungeon... no, wait a minute, it's coming to me... a half-sunken ancient temple, populated by Sahuagin and other aquatic monsters. But why do the characters need to get into the temple? Riches, natch, but there needs to be something more. Lemme think.

Mikelibrarian

04-14-2009 04:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10234391)

It should come as no surprise that I love Sahuagin. And it should come as no further surprise that I never get to use them.

Except once, as antagonists in a pirate campaign, where they did pretty much just play the role of raiders. It was fun. I set up things so that two rival pirate ships stopped off in a friendly port, with the plot hook dangled in front of them of a gang war in the city streets, when BAM! I hit them with a Sahuagin raid instead. Backed up by Sea Trolls for some variety. Man, that was a fun adventure.

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Sahuagin are plenty bad ass, but it's difficult to make use of them. There's so much more prep the characters have to

do before going into a Sahuagin dungeon... no, wait a minute, it's coming to me... a half-sunken ancient temple, populated by Sahuagin and other aquatic monsters. But why do the characters need to get into the temple? Riches, natch, but there needs to be something more. Lemme think.

The temple is actually the first temple consecrated to your party's cleric's god which collapsed beneath the waves in an ancient cataclysm. The party must liberate the bones of the first high priest for an epic level Ressurrection spell because only she seal the rift to the Abyss that is opening up over the party's nation's capitol city. Oh, and having a +2 trident is pretty cool.

Hellzon

04-14-2009 04:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Spoilers for "Alliance at Nefelus" from Dungeon #165 (the latest).

[Alliance at Nefelus](#) has arctic Sahuagin living in a magic iceberg/fortress (sieging a tropical island by summoning a ring of ice around it to block ships). When the PCs arrive to infiltrate the iceberg, they pop out of the water in the Sahuagins' lair.

Then there's ice giants and a white dragon, but I got this weird idea of Sahuagins in a magically frozen iceberg travelling the high seas, occasionally stopping to raid coastal towns. There's the coast raiding again, but an iceberg is a slightly more convenient dungeon than a shark city at the bottom of the sea. ;)

JRM

04-14-2009 05:36 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10231492)

Sahuagin

We've discussed these before in some detail, I think at the Aquatic Elf entry, and if I remember correctly sombreros and cigars somehow came into the equation.

Ay! Do not speak lightly of the Sea Caballeros' cigars, senor, for they are far more than they appear. Even finding a way to make cigars out of seaweed that can be smoked underwater would be a great achievement, but those cigars give *water breathing* to those who smoke them! That is why no caballero is ever without a packet of *cigarillos of water smoking*.*

:)

As for our sacred sombreros, they are a secret no gringo will ever learn!:mad:

*The Sea Caballeros may love their tobacco, but their spokesman neglects to mention the risk of excessive smoking causing Gill Cancer, which requires them to resort to *cure disease* spells on occasion.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10233503)

They're under sea elves. They're only hinted at in the Sahuagin entry (it says that Tritons suspect a linkage between the two races).

As to the Malenti/Sahuagin origins question, the relevant Monstrous Manual entries have a definite implication both races are related to Aquatic Elves. Indeed, Malenti is listed under Elf rather than under Sahuagin:

Quote:

Elf - Malenti

There is a bond between aquatic elves and their hated enemies, the sahuagin, that neither race openly acknowledges.

Few aquatic elves believe in the existence of malenti, as they suggest some disturbing possibilities about sahuagin origins.

Sahuagin:

The tritons however, are purported to have believe that sahuagin are distantly related to sea elves, claiming that the drow spawned the sahuagin.

Although they're externally identical, I suspect that Malenti and Aquatic Elves have minor internal anatomical differences, which dolphins can perceive via their sonar - hence the "Malenti do exist, however, and are identical to aquatic elves in most ways" and "Although the sea elves themselves have a difficult time discerning malenti spies, dolphins might (20%) sense one of the changelings." bits in the Malenti entries.

I believe it is also significant that when Sahuagin and Malenti breed, the offspring are invariably Malenti. That says Malenti are the genetically dominant, and the Sahuagin-variety involves recessive traits so has to be actively maintained. There's a fair chance 'Malenti' is the species natural form, and 'Sahuagin' is what they've turned themselves into (or been turned into).

As for the Drow-Sahuagin link, I can't help wondering whether it's the other way round. If the origins of the Sahuagin are unknown, perhaps its because they're older than the Drow and the latter were created by the former, not vica-versa?

It may even have gone full-circle: Land elves became aquatic elves, who were warped into Sahuagin by worshipping Sekolah, then a branch of Sahuagin entered the undersea and became Kuo-Toa, who eventually converted some of the land elves to worship their Fiendish Beast-Gods, resulting in the drow.

Aquatic Elf + Shark God (Sekolah) -> Sahuagin

Sahuagin + Cave Lobster Goddess (Blibdoolpoolp) -> Kuo Toa

Kuo Toa + Land Elf + Spider Goddess (Loth) -> Drow

DMH

04-14-2009 08:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10233503)

They're under sea elves. They're only hinted at in the Sahuagin entry (it says that Tritons suspect a linkage between the two races).

Ah, so hopefully I made some comments back then on applying the same concept to other races (like humans and orcs or kobolds and gnomes).

6inTruder

04-15-2009 10:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10236615)

*Ay! Do not speak lightly of the Sea Caballeros' cigars, senor, for they are far more than they appear. Even finding a way to make cigars out of seaweed that can be smoked underwater would be a great achievement, but those cigars give water breathing to those who smoke them! That is why no caballero is ever without a packet of cigarillos of water smoking.**
:)

So are those a Heroic or Paragon tier wonderous item?

mythSSK

04-15-2009 12:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10232715)

Now, does anyone else remember a thread here about how the sahuagin - undersea shark-Nazis! - actually ruled most of the world? Krakens were too hard to go after in the abyssal depths, as were morkoths, and aquatic elves survived near river mouths where the salinity was too low for sahuagins' comfort, but otherwise they totally dominated the seas, occasionally sending raiding groups on dry land to harass the air-breathers for kicks. Bit like Predators, actually.

As soon as sahuagin came up, I thought about this post. It was my favouritest sahuagin thing ever, and made me really want to use them in a game (haven't yet...). I remembered reading it somewhere not on the rpg.net forums, though.

FAKE EDIT: Found it. It's originally from the Frank & K Tome series (highly suggest you check them out if you haven't already).

Quote:

Borderlands of the Sahuagin: Sore Winners

The first thing to understand about the Sahuagin is that they have already won. Completely. The surface of the world is about $\frac{3}{4}$ ocean and they own almost all of it. From the standpoint of the Sahuagin, the only places on the planet that have non-Sahuagin races in them are the stale crusts that they already had the presence of mind to cut off the sandwich. All of the non-Sahuagin races are all ghettoized. Even the other aquatic races have been marginalized to the point where they only get the brackish water (Locathah), the rocky shallows (merfolk), the underground darks (Kuo-Toans), or the muddy salt marshes (Lizardfolk). The real real estate – the ocean and coastline – are pretty much the private playground of the Sahuagin.

Individually, Sahuagin will kick your ass, and collectively they will kick the ass of any nation you happen to support. The combined populations of all other sapient races on any planet are less than the population of Sahuagin on that planet. The Sahuagin are also much smarter and better organized than you are so their cities are actually more productive than yours per person in addition to the fact that they have more cities than all the other races and their cities are more populous.

The Sahuagin mutate constantly, but are not inclined to Chaos. They just all have different appearances and capabilities. But every one of them is gifted with super intelligence and thick natural armor. The Sahuagin deep seer are some of the most gifted wizards on the planet and honestly have nothing better to do than just scry on crap and tell the armies where there's some cool stuff to go loot. From time to time the Sahuagin will come onto land to beat the living crap out of people and take control of important or valuable items. Then they take the spoils of war and drag it back under water, laughing the whole time.

Against this backdrop of crushing inferiority, how do the other races maintain? Most of them are fighting for stakes so small that they haven't even noticed that the vast majority of the planet is owned and operated by brutally efficient fish men. But one race that certainly has noticed the power discrepancy is the race of elves most likely to be forgotten: the Sea Elves. They actually live in many of the same areas and have a war going with them.

Life is hard for a Sea Elf, because every one of them is born into a post-apocalyptic world where mutants run amok and hunt them for sport. But it's actually even worse than that because in addition to simply being physically and intellectually inferior to the Sahuagin like everyone else is – they are actually stupid and useless even contrasted with the surface races. An average Sea Elf is as much the intellectual inferior to a Sahuagin as a Griffin is to a normal human. The Sahuagin consider the Sea Elves to be little more than animals, and they aren't wrong.

The Sea Elves keep surviving at all because they see farther than Sahuagin in low-light conditions (and are thus often able to swim away from potential encounters with Sahuagin during the morning and twilight hours that Sea Elves leave their hidden nests), and also because every so often a Sahuagin gets born who looks exactly like a Sea Elf. These Sahuagin mutants, called Malenti, are a little bit worse than a normal Sahuagin in that they lack the rending claws. But they're still stronger and smarter than any Sea Elf that ever swam the 7 seas. So when these Malenti realize that they get a crap deal from Sahuagin society, they often as not run off to join the Sea Elves, where they almost immediately rise to positions of leadership. They also gain crap loads of experience very quickly because the odds are so stacked against them. In short, the reason that the Sea Elves still exist is that they actually are a splinter faction of Sahuagin that uses real sea elves as beasts of burden instead of simply hunting them like the more normal Sahuagin groups do.

And yet, despite the fact that the Sahuagin have won at everything, they still continue to fight the other races and take their children and stuff. Partly this is to feed the insatiable demands of their Baatezu masters, and partly this is because on some deep level the Sahuagin are convinced that it actually couldn't possibly be that easy. In addition to looking for bling and candy to take from the weaker races, the Deep Seers are also combing the world for the one thing that the Great Mothers are pretty sure exists somewhere: the hidden army that the other races are putting together to take the world back from the clutches of the Sahuagin Empire. As far as anyone knows, it doesn't exist, but for some reason the Great Mothers keep insisting that the searching continue. Maybe they know something we

don't?

Inyssius

04-15-2009 12:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Damn, I was going to post that!

Myth has it right: read that.

Sleeper

04-15-2009 01:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Cool description. Sounds a bit like a more fantastic version of Čapek's *War with the Newts*, agumented with over-the-top (Sh)Ar(k)yan superiority (though the "every one of them is gifted with super intelligence" is a bit much).

demiurge1138

04-15-2009 01:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10240641)

Cool description. Sounds a bit like a more fantastic version of Čapek's War with the Newts, agumented with over-the-top (Sh)Ar(k)yan superiority (though the "every one of them is gifted with super intelligence" is a bit much).

Sahuagin have an average intelligence of 14. Humans have an average Int of 10. Sahuagin are at a decided advantage.

JRM

04-15-2009 03:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10240063)

So are those a Heroic or Paragon tier wonderous item?

Ay? The Sea Caballeros do not understand, señor.:confused: It is the caballeros who are paragons of heroism, not their cigarillos!:)

Sleeper

04-15-2009 04:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10240691)
Sahuagin have an average intelligence of 14. Humans have an average Int of 10. Sahuagin are at a decided advantage.

And sea elves are even smarter. Seems like every other race in the Monstrous Manual has an above-human intelligence, doesn't it? Yet this rarely comes into play, aside from a few extra spells

Inyssius

04-15-2009 05:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10241028)
And sea elves are even smarter.

Ah, we have an edition disconnect. In 3e, aquatic elves have an average Intelligence score of 8.

Sleeper

04-15-2009 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10241072)
Ah, we have an edition disconnect. In 3e, aquatic elves have an average Intelligence score of 8.

14-18 in 2E, compared to the sahuagin's 13-14. I imagine the authors felt no guilt making such a dramatic change with an obvious and widespread impact because, well, it makes no real difference. Supposed differences in intelligence are rarely reflected in much of anything.

Inyssius

04-15-2009 05:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10241099)

14-18 in 2E, compared to the sahuagin's 13-14. I imagine the authors felt no guilt making such a dramatic change with an obvious and widespread impact because, well, it makes no real difference. Supposed differences in intelligence are rarely reflected in much of anything.

Indeed. Witness the darkmantle and (again) roper, with their nigh-genius intellect that goes completely unused all the time considering that all they do is hide in caves and devour manflesh whenever it comes within biting range.

I'm not entirely sure of who you mean by "the authors", though; just in case I'm wrong, the Tomes were based on 3e material.

Sleeper

04-15-2009 06:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10241144)

I'm not entirely sure of who you mean by "the authors", though; just in case I'm wrong, the Tomes were based on 3e material.

I was referring to the 2E/3E change over, not the Tomes. Whomever updated the aquatic elf entry in the MM and replaced the Int 14-18 with 8 (to avoid the cascading mechanical effects I imagine, since stats mean a lot more in 3E).

DMH

04-15-2009 09:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by mythSSK (Post 10240455)

It's originally from the Frank & K Tome series (highly suggest you check them out if you haven't already).

So what are they and where might we find them?

The Dragon article The Color of Magic (issue 200) gave me an idea for giving sahuagen slimy biotech magic. Their wizards are called manipulators and most of the existing 2e spells are easy to describe as some gooy, icky critter that are mechanically identical. It might even be a way to incorporate fear and horror checks into a non-Ravenloft setting.

YojimboC

04-15-2009 10:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by mythSSK (Post 10240455)

As soon as sahuagin came up, I thought about this post. It was my favouritest sahuagin thing ever, and made me really want to use them in a game (haven't yet...). I remembered reading it somewhere not on the rpg.net forums, though.

Borderlands of the Sahuagin: Sore Winners

Brilliant. Utterly, utterly brilliant. Must use.

The best thing is that it gets the land-lubbers into the ocean -- because any world that is controlled by the Sahuagin is a world where Evil has triumphed, and the good deities are going to be a little torqued. They're going to want to send their servants into the deeps and to mess things up. Although, riled Sea Devils is just going to mean worse trouble...

Inyssiis

04-16-2009 12:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10241547)

So what are they and where might we find them?

Here, and your biotech idea is great.

JRM

04-16-2009 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10241099)

14-18 in 2E, compared to the sahuagin's 13-14. I imagine the authors felt no guilt making such a dramatic change with an obvious and widespread impact because, well, it makes no real difference. Supposed differences in intelligence are rarely reflected in much of anything.

Yes and regular (high) elves and grey elves are even smarter (Int 14-20). As Sleeper says, it doesn't make much of a difference. Well, except for making them popular races to pick for PC magic-users.

The 2E AD&D drow elf would give a sahuagin a run for its money too - super-smart (Int 14-20 like most elves), at least two hit dice, magic items as standard, innate magic resistance and spell casting, keen senses and heightened surprise chances.

JRM

04-16-2009 03:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10241164)

I was referring to the 2E/3E change over, not the Tomes. Whomever updated the aquatic elf entry in the MM and replaced the Int 14-18 with 8 (to avoid the cascading mechanical effects I imagine, since stats mean a lot more in 3E,

Well in fairness, due to AD&D racial minimums the vast majority of 2E elves probably around 14 Int and the 18 Int elves are likely as rare as 18 Int humans (except for AD&D Grey elves, who have a +1 to their intelligence scores so genius+ specimens are a little commoner).

I guess you could fix it in 3E by having even a default grey elves use the 'non-elite' stat array (13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8) rather than the basic mook array (11, 11, 11, 10, 10, 10), stick the 12 or 13 in Int, slap a +2 racial adjustment on it and bob's your uncle, Int 14-15!

Those damn elves, always thinking they're better than us.:cool:

Sleeper

04-16-2009 06:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10242903)

Those damn elves, always thinking they're better than us.:cool:

They are.

They were bioengineered by sahuagin wizards to be the perfect spies and infiltrators. While they were tinkering, they corrected a few nasty design problems in the human form. Pretty? Check. Every single one. Getting old and feeble? Unchecked. Immortal. Naturally talented and perfect? Check. They're smart and agile and all that, too.

Been so long that nobody realizes, but the elves are sleeper agents. Everything they see goes back to the squishy orbs the sahuagin wizards use instead of crystal balls. And inside each head? An on-off switch. The sharkfolk cast the right spell, and suddenly the entire village turns into sahuagin.

The sea elves were the first faltering attempts, and the grand spell didn't always quite stick. Some of the sahuagin experimented on didn't transform. Though they did change, genetically. The recessive traits occasionally combined in their children to make malenti. The wizards fixed this problem when they got around to making the rest of the elves, who were designed as forward observers or advanced scouts, on the one big blindspot of the aquatic race: Dry land.

The sahuagin created dozens of varieties so they'd have a spy in every terrestrial habitat. Since they've won, they rarely bother to use the elves for anything beyond peering through their eyes. But long ago, before they took over everything, they did occasionally turn an army or two when it was tactically prudent.

And then they just blamed it all on the drow. Who are entirely innocent. Or were, before they started to buy the lies about them. The dark elves were created by the sahuagin entirely solely to serve scapegoats. Color coded "evil" elves, to explain all the stories of elves turning on their allies. To disguise what all elves really are.

mythSSK

04-16-2009 06:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10241547)
So what are they and where might we find them?

The Tome series is a bunch of massive revamps to the 3.5 system made by the good fellows over on the Gaming Den. The Dungeonomicon and Races of War especially have heaps of fantastic, usable material.

Tome of Necromancy: Explores the options of having negative energy inherently evil or as a natural force, necromancer PCs, necromantic feats, the Necronomicon (a look at necromancy spells), new and revamped rules for undead (including a comprehensive listing of undead that have appeared in all WotC books and what changes are made to each one to make them compatible with the new rules).

Tome of Fiends: Heaps a dissection of alignment and evil, a much-improved version of the paladin code, a commentary on law and chaos, classes for fiends, fiendish taint, feats, a new system for fiends' spell-like abilities (brilliant), optional rules regarding *wishes*, damage reduction and special materials, an explanation as to why fiends even care about the Prime Material, demonology and fiend summoning (brilliant), adventuring ideas for every single one of the lower planes (low level, mid level AND high level), rulership of the lower planes, trade and business on the lower planes.

The Dungeonomicon: Includes the Socialomicon (brilliant commentary on the D&D world), Charactonomicon (revamped classes), the Economicon (brilliant look at the D&D economy), the Maginomicon (magic fixes), the Thermodymaninomicon (dungeon ecology), the Bionomicon (more ecology stuff), the Empirinomicon (good material for Myconids, Aboleth, Illithid, Drow, Beholders, Kuo-Toa, and Troglodytes), the Constructanomicon (dungeon building), and the Lexiconinomicon (language).

Races of War: Revamp of unusual races, converting monsters into playable races, more redone classes, character backgrounds, new feat system (all feats scale), advanced combat rules, revamped weapon/armour rules, logistics, demographics, mass combat rules, racial background for dwarves, gnolls, giants, goblinoids, elves, gnomes, orcs, sahuagin (the source of the quote above) and halflings.

EDIT: Sorry Inyssiis, didn't notice your tiny little post. Looks like you beat me to it. You know, I haven't seen anyone on the RPG.net forums discuss these tomes. I might actually start a topic based around them.

JRM

04-16-2009 07:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10243574)

They were bioengineered by sahuagin wizards to be the perfect spies and infiltrators. While they were tinkering, they corrected a few nasty design problems in the human form. Pretty? Check. Every single one. Getting old and feeble? Unchecked. Immortal. Naturally talented and perfect? Check. They're smart and agile and all that, too.

Nah, still prefer my Aquatic Elf + Sekolah Worship -> Sahuagin explanation.

If Sahuagin are going to transform members of their species into spies to infiltrate another race surely they'd make them look like the other race, not some entirely new race who would be bound to attract curiosity and suspicion - i.e. they'd make their 'Sahuagin Spies' look like tritons and humans (or whatever other enemy races existed) rather than elves, which in this alternate world have never been seen on land before.

Or just use dopplegangers, which are better infiltrators with their ESP and shape-changing.

JRM

04-16-2009 07:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've just downloaded the pdf from the link Inyssius gave and am flicking through it as we speak. Some great stuff here, and a lot of the background is just as applicable to pre-3e versions of D&D, which is nice.

I've already come across a good deal of the economic theorizing from the high-level economics post Frank Trollman contributed so much to on the paizo boards last year - wherever that is...

Ah, here we are: Paizo Messageboards / Pathfinder RPG / General Discussion / **High Level Economics**.

DMH

04-16-2009 08:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10242088)

Here, and your biotech idea is great.

Thank you.

Mixing my idea with the Nazi sahuagen and one gets an invasion from the sea in a reverse manner of how we are exploring the oceans. They have suits to keep them wet and dim the light and creatures replace the submersibles. Weird, blobby structures are placed on land to extend their range and hold over the natives via garrisons.

Wakboth

04-16-2009 08:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10245712)

Thank you.

Mixing my idea with the Nazi sahuagen and one gets an invasion from the sea in a reverse manner of how we are exploring the oceans. They have suits to keep them wet and dim the light and creatures replace the submersibles. Weird, blobby structures are placed on land to extend their range and hold over the natives via garrisons.

Read "The Kraken Wakes" by Wyndham for inspiration. :)

The Last Conformist

04-17-2009 02:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10231492)

As with all aquatic monsters in the MM you have to feel that Sahuagin won't ever reach their full potential because, really, how many campaigns revolve around the sea? At most my guess is that they tend to appear simply as raiders in most games.

The proper way to use all the aquatic critters would surely be to make an entirely aquatic campaign where the PCs are all sea-elvess, merfolk, etc. Or indeed sahuagin.

Sleeper

04-17-2009 02:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10246854)

The proper way to use all the aquatic critters would surely be to make an entirely aquatic campaign where the PCs are all sea-elvess, merfolk, etc. Or indeed sahuagin.

Or you could have a campaign featuring an invasion. Sahuagin have terrorized the coastal regions for years. They're the viking analogs. Appearing out of nowhere from the sea, raiding the villages, pillaging, and taking slaves away to an unknown fate. Most of the time, they steal just enough. Not the food or the grain, because they don't want their victims to starve. If they strip them bare, the villagers will starve come winter; and in a few seasons when the sahuagin come back there will be nobody to steal from. So it's better to cultivate them, like schools of fish or beds of oysters. And anyway grains get soggy and rot underwater.

But this time, there is a strange storm. Not thunder and lightning or anything violent like that. Just rain. Lots of rain. Lots and lots of rain. Steady, constant, quiet. The forefront walking across the land, like a grey wall. The villages behind it vanish from sight, but it takes a few days before anyone realizes that the rain is unnatural. And nothing that passes through the veil returns.

Because walking under cover of the rain are the sahuagin. They have made an alliance with the kraken, who are using their mighty-weather magics to enable their allies to march on the cities of humanity. This time, it is not a raiding party. It's an army. A slight touch of magic, just barely worth mentioning, is all that is necessary to allow the legions to breathe in the perpetual downpour. Where they pass, the villages are empty of anything of value. Anyone they encounter under the pale gray shroud is slain, leaving behind corpses that swell in the humidity.

As all water ultimately returns to the sea, so they believe the rightful place of all wealth is the blue depths. No more will they be satisfied with the morsels they can scrounge from wrecked vessels and foundered ships. The avaricious sahuagin aided by the covetous kraken are cutting a swath toward the rich inland cities, seeking the formerly inaccessible wealth, squirreled away behind miles of thin and burning air.

Kiiratam

04-17-2009 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I vaguely recall a Forgotten Realms story that answered the connection between drow, malenti, aquatic elves and sahuagin. "Secrets of Blood, Spirits of the Sea" in Realms of Arcane (I think).

Story details within:

Essentially, back when the drow were surface dwellers, a drow archmage was trying to make shock troops for use against the sea elves. So he used aquatic elves as a basis for this race. The first attempt came out looking like a regular sea elf, so he told one of his sub-ordinates to dispose of it, and got working on the next batch. Said sub-ordinate named the child Malenti and sent him to live with the sea elves, training him for the coming conflict. Eventually, the sahuagin came out right, eating their sea elf birth mother from the inside-out. Flash forward: the sahuagin have been pressing the sea elves hard. General Malenti is the leader of the only significant opposition left. And then he defects, wearing a pearl vest containing all the magic of the sea elves. And that, children, is why Faerunian sea elves couldn't cast spells.

I just took sahuagin as sea-orcs and ran with it. Surface orcs are boar-like in appearance, ergo sea orcs are sharklike (and deep orcs are spider-like). I don't have sea elves, so no malenti as written (which is regrettable). I suppose I could throw them back in a merfolk imitations...

Oh, and just for fun: elves and gnolls are the same race: elves are female, gnolls are male. Explains why they aren't ruling the whole world, even with their low birthrate.

YojimboC

04-17-2009 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10247003)

As all water ultimately returns to the sea, so they believe the rightful place of all wealth is the blue depths. No more will they be satisfied with the morsels they can scrounge from wrecked vessels and foundered ships. The avaricious sahuagin aided by the covetous kraken are cutting a swath toward the rich inland cities, seeking the formerly inaccessible wealth, squirreled away behind miles of thin and burning air.

Awesome.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kiiratam (Post 10247318)

Oh, and just for fun: elves and gnolls are the same race: elves are female, gnolls are male. Explains why they aren't ruling the whole world, even with their low birthrate.

Why gnolls?

Sleeper

04-17-2009 09:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10247476)

Awesome.

Thank you. It might be fun to go through the MM and come up with world-conquering or world-threatening scenarios for every sapient creature (and some of the non-intelligent types). There's just something about an invasion or other widespread calamity....

Inyssius

04-17-2009 09:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Do ropers next!

Um.

Well...

... I got nothing.

Sleeper

04-17-2009 11:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10248418)

Do ropers next!

Um.

Well...

... I got nothing.

World-conquering?

Start with the idea that ropers are very old dao. Humanoid elementals of great magical power, who as they age lose their marble and basalt perfection. Given millennia, even Michelangelo's *David* will crumble. But dao do not crumble with age; they melt. Their faces run, their bodies slide and shift. Gravity pulls the mass of their body down from their shoulders to their knees, and their sculpted forms become like wax. Well, really hard wax. They're still rock. They just resemble stalagmites instead of muscled, perpetually elf-perfect youths.

Their lower jaw slides away from the hinge, and becomes embedded in the mass below, allowing their jaws to open unnaturally wide. Their arms flail as they lose control of their basic functions and the flailing attenuates them, pulls the mass out thin like a piece of spaghetti. While they have lost their mobility, their accumulated wisdom and cunning remains. Their older children abandon them, their beauty has turned into amorphous hideousness. All that remains is their hate.

And the youngest children of their children. Child-dao, wicked children. Bullied and beat upon by the adults, they seek refuge in the only place that seems safe. At the stumps of their grandparents. The elders are too feeble to catch or strike, so there is no threat. And like grandchildren of all races, they bask in the warmth of unconditional approval. They lap up tales of grandeur, of their own potential. They listen intently to stories about the foolishness of their own abusive parents. Children are just so easy to manipulate, aren't they?

So even the ropers who have lost the *wish*, who no longer have the reality-warping powers, can stay in touch. Flitting from one roper to the next, packs of stony-faced kids pass messages, create a network. The ropers think, and plot, and share. And whisper words that turn their children's children against their mothers and fathers.

It will be soon. The words have passed, the magic builds. The dao empire has one weakness, and it will be exploited. Nobody pays attention to children. With the knowledge and foresight of their forefathers, the basalt brats will sneak into the great vaults. The treasure troves of a thousand worlds, a collection of the choicest selections of more than a million years of acquisition. Hoarded away by the dao, protected. Against everything except the cunning betrayal of their own children, who know all their secrets because they learned them at the knees of those who built the wards in the first place.

With that power, the ropers will regain their forms, but their aeons-long prison will have forever changed them. Yes, they regain their perfect rocklike bodies. But they also retain the ability to change, to shift to slide. To sprout tentacles from their backs, that whip and drain. To drop their jaws into their chest, to devour mortals whole. And they will have regained their full power, with their every utterance manifesting as a *wish*. An ancient and wicked evil is reborn.

Their thwarted dreams of conquest will boil over, and they will move. First the quasi-planes, then the other elemental primes. Then the mortal, material world. To do this, they have a wicked punishment planned for their own children, the ones who abandoned them. Powerful magic will warp their bodies, melt them, turn them into slag. Their skin will perpetually bubble; the unending inner heat will drive them mad with pain.

Their children will become the new ropers. Unstable forms, truly half-melted. Bodies soft, the heat on the verge of turning the stone of their bodies to liquid. Sent as mindless cannon fodder or shock troops, they slide forward like magma. Their tentacles extrude and burn. And around them, like a corona, is a wealth of random magical effects. A relic of their power, manifested by their subconscious through the lens of their madness.

And from this, a new cross-planar empire will be forged from the patience and plots of millennia.

Nothing to do with anything people are talking about, but I just turned on to these articles from somethingawful.com:

[WTF, D&D: 1st Edition Monster Manual \(and Part 2\)](#)

JRM

04-17-2009 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10248762)

Nothing to do with anything people are talking about, but I just turned on to these articles from somethingawful.com:

WTF, D&D: 1st Edition Monster Manual (and Part 2)

Well it's tangentially related, so I guess I'll forgive you. ;)

Found Steve & Zack's ribbing of the **Morkoth** the most amusing. By Hextor, the 1E illustration of that monster is chuckle-worthy. I just can't look at that squid-man thing with a straight face.

Wakboth

04-17-2009 06:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by YojimboC (Post 10247476)

Why gnolls?

Why *not* gnolls? They're awesome! ;)

noisms

04-17-2009 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10248361)

Thank you. It might be fun to go through the MM and come up with world-conquering or world-threatening scenarios for every sapient creature (and some of the non-intelligent types). There's just something about an invasion or other widespread calamity....

Sounds like a follow-up thread.... ;)

Brandi

04-17-2009 07:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Steve: I wonder how a [mimic] treasure chest mates.

Zack: You ever seen Russian nesting dolls?

Steve: Yeah.

Zack: Imagine that, only with treasure chest jizz everywhere. EVERYWHERE.

Okay, I laughed.

noisms

04-17-2009 07:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Satyr

Satyrs are an "inoffensive fun-loving race" who spend most of their time in the forest dancing about, shagging dryads, playing the panpipes, and trying to *charm* comely human females. Our old friends The Sages believe that they are the male counterpart to dryads - sexual dimorphism writ large, you might say.

Satyrs in D&D are presented as relatively harmless hedonists who, at worse, will steal a few valuables or a female party member. I think on balance I prefer them as rather more ambiguous and possibly malicious beings - who might dance and drink with somebody and then stab them, just for 'the fun of it', perhaps not realising or caring about the consequences.

Korred

This is a smaller but stronger version of the Satyr, which has rather more fairy-tale/mythical influences. Its hair can be used to ensnare or bind, and its possessions will turn to gold if sprinkled with holy water. If you interrupt one of their dances you are forced to dance until you die, which is a bit more like it.

Sleeper

04-17-2009 08:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10249995)

Satyrs are an "inoffensive fun-loving race" who spend most of their time in the forest dancing about, shagging

dryads, playing the panpipes, and trying to charm comely human females. Our old friends The Sages believe that they are the male counterpart to dryads - sexual dimorphism writ large, you might say.

Satyrs in D&D are presented as relatively harmless hedonists who, at worse, will steal a few valuables or a female party member. I think on balance I prefer them as rather more ambiguous and possibly malicious beings - who might dance and drink with somebody and then stab them, just for 'the fun of it', perhaps not realising or caring about the consequences.

They're plenty malicious. They're the original date-rape monster. The *charm* spell is D&D's GHB.

Hellzon

04-17-2009 08:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Ooh, satyrs. One of my favourites. I think i mentioned the 4E satyrs being right assholes during the centaur discussion, but here goes:

Quote:

Originally Posted by 4E MM

Satyrs are self-centered, greedy and decadent creatures that enjoy food, drink, and other pleasures. They use sly trickery to take what they desire from others as it pleases them.

Satyrs usually seek to "befriend" travelers they meet. This often means plying them with drink, bemusing them with song, or inveigling them with sorrowful tales in order to rob them later. Satyrs in a murderous mood attack without warning, and they fight to kill.

A rather obvious way to go if you want stuff in the MM to be fightable. Me likey.

And that's where Korred are from, huh? 4E puts them in the Manual of the Planes of all places. With a [really freaky look](#).

6inTruder

04-18-2009 06:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

no comment on that goofy picture. I mean, I guess it's okay, if you don't mind your satyrs hangin' at Bally's all the time.

JRM

04-18-2009 07:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

My first comment on Satyrs was going to to be similar to Sleepers, but a bit more extreme. Read the description, "a female charmed by a satyr might return after 1d4 weeks (10% chance)." i.e. there's a 90% chance they are never seen again. That's doesn't suggest an "inoffensive, fun-loving race" to me but "race of sex-murderers".

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10252397)

no comment on that goofy picture. I mean, I guess it's okay, if you don't mind your satyrs hangin' at Bally's all the time.

Well it's far from the worst picture in the Monstrous Manual, although I find the Satyr's pose rather disturbing. What is the meaning of that pumping fist-gesture, and the position he's holding his pan-pipes is rather chuckle worthy.

"Is that a pan-pipe in your hand, or are you pleased to see me Mr Satyr?":o

"Pah! I thought a satyr would have a larger instrument than *that*.";)

6inTruder

04-18-2009 08:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

why do you think he works that physique?! To keep attention away from where he's... Deficient.

I'm also curious to the satyr/dryad relationship now that dryads are creepy wood monsters.

DanSolo

04-18-2009 08:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10252787)

My first comment on Satyrs was going to be similar to Sleepers, but a bit more extreme. Read the description, "a female charmed by a satyr might return after 1d4 weeks (10% chance)." i.e. there's a 90% chance they are never seen again. That's doesn't suggest an "inoffensive, fun-loving race" to me but "race of sex-murderers".

There's always the possibility that the lady doesn't *want* to return I guess.

JRM

04-18-2009 09:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10252928)

There's always the possibility that the lady doesn't want to return I guess.

I'd be more willing to accept that as an explanation if there were any mention in the Satyr's writeup that they

are often encountered with *charmed* lady friends, like the dryad is sometimes accompanied by human lover/bodyguards.

So, unless these unfortunate enchanted women count among the "3d8 woodland creatures" included in a Satyr celebration or the goat-men somehow turn the women into dryads (Hmm... that's a nice idea come to think of it.), I'd think they're likely to have been disposed of in some fashion.

Hey, I just noticed that 'celebration' write up says it includes fauns - are we talking baby deer or Mister Tumnus type creatures here? If the latter, Satyrs are essentially the same thing. If the former, it makes me fear the revelry is even more perverted than I first thought!::eek:

Kakita Kojiro

04-18-2009 09:40 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 10250070)

And that's where Korred are from, huh? 4E puts them in the Manual of the Planes of all places. With a really freaky look.

Well, the Korred is apparently the rather obscure male counterpart to the [Korrigan](#) of Brittany. Which are usually bewitching, tiny elfin women who dance naked in the woods and strike those who see them blind, and such. So it's kind of weird that D&D would've adapted the Korred as a Satyr-alike (which fits *some* folktales of them), but missed out on adapting the Korred as a Nymph/Dryad-alike.

JRM

04-18-2009 09:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10252811)

why do you think he works that physique?! To keep attention away from where he's... Deficient.

I'm also curious to the satyr/dryad relationship now that dryads are creepy wood monsters.

Well the latter may increase their interest in human females. Although, if they're still the male equivalent of dryads wouldn't that mean they should have stamen instead of mammalian reproductive equipment?

Or maybe they have several male plant-organs, which would really give them stamina.:)

I apologize to any botanists out there for that last pun.:D

Mikelibrarian

04-18-2009 09:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 10250070)

Ooh, satyrs. One of my favourites. I think i mentioned the 4E satyrs being right assholes during the centaur discussion, but here goes:

A rather obvious way to go if you want stuff in the MM to be fightable. Me likey.

And that's where Korred are from, huh? 4E puts them in the Manual of the Planes of all places. With a really freaky look.

TAAccording to Wikipedia : The korred, was introduced in the 4th set of "Monster Cards" (1982), and was later detailed in Monster Manual II (1983). The korred is further detailed in Dragon #119 (March 1987), in "The Ecology of the Korred."

I probably have that Dragon magazine somewhere. The wikipedia article also says in 4E Satyrs tend to be Chaotic Neutral, which I think is more appropriate than true Neutral. My image of Centaurs would also make them Chaotic Neutral rather than true Neutral.

Granted, their habit of date raping would make them tend towards evil, but one of the oddities of the Neutral alignments is that many "Neutral" creatures tends towards evil acts, such as the Lizardman's taste for human flesh (sorry but hunting sentient beings for food is evil), the Quaggoth's attacking almost everything it sees, the Gibberlings' attacking everything and Buccaneers stealing and kidnapping. The Slaadi as written in the Fiend Folio seem more like a race of demons than of Chaotic Neutral beings. My Limbo inhabitants at the very least all have unlimited polymorph self ability.

noisms

04-18-2009 03:10 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10253089)

I'd be more willing to accept that as an explanation if there were any mention in the Satyr's writeup that they are often encountered with charmed lady friends, like the dryad is sometimes accompanied by human lover/bodyguards

So, unless these unfortunate enchanted women count among the "3d8 woodland creatures" included in a Satyr celebration or the goat-men somehow turn the women into dryads (Hmm... that's a nice idea come to think of it.), I think they're likely to have been disposed of in some fashion.

Maybe turned into fauns....

Kiiratam

04-18-2009 05:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

YojimboC: Elves and Gnolls

It dates back to me doing a campaign based on Dr. Strangelove, as inspired by [this](#) image. So the American changed into a Hunnic paladin, and the Russian into a gnoll with an elf woman wrapped around his leg in the finest Vallejo style. And the bombers turned into dragons. So yeah.

On fauns: I've always seen baby deer spelled as 'fawns' but it's not like I speak the Queen's English. Do we actually have stats for the monstrous fauns? Are they immature satyrs? Satyrs born without a voice or tone deaf?...Then I checked the Monstrous Manual and realized that they're listed as synonyms. Perhaps we could call satyrs without pipes fauns?

Ooo! Korred have their own language! Another one for the obscure list!

A doomsday plot by satyrs? We can do that. There's the obvious: a massive mob of satyrs has descended on a metropolis during the seasonal festivities. While many of them spur the festival to greater heights of decadence, a small task force transplants dryad oaks in a perimeter about the city. Between the satyrs and the dryads (and korred to deal with pesky fortifications via their spell-like abilities), the entire city is charmed. At this point, there's a lovely collection of pliable individuals, just waiting for the mastermind to step out of the shadows (the Fey Lords? An Archdruid? Pan?).

The less obvious: satyr pipes produce a sleep effect on all individuals in a 60ft radius. I'd read this as no individual creature can have 4+ HD, but everyone else has to make the save. To say nothing of cause fear! And the duration is 1d6 hours! I can see satyrs being enlisted into guerrilla groups for all sorts of wonderful effects. I can see it now: a mad bardic highwayman, lord of the satyrs, capturing nobles traveling through his forest and ransoming them. Except the nobles aren't quite right when they come back...

JRM

04-18-2009 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10253128)

I probably have that Dragon magazine somewhere. The wikipedia article also says in 4E Satyrs tend to be Chaotic Neutral, which I think is more appropriate than true Neutral. My image of Centaurs would also make them Chaotic Neutral rather than true Neutral.

Pardon? I didn't think 4E even had the Chaotic Neutral alignment. Last I looked it was still reduced to five alignments in the progression:

Lawful Good - Good - Neutral (Unaligned) - Evil - Chaotic Evil.

Mikelibrarian

04-19-2009 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10254101)

Pardon? I didn't think 4E even had the Chaotic Neutral alignment. Last I looked it was still reduced to five alignments in the progression:

Lawful Good - Good - Neutral (Unaligned) - Evil - Chaotic Evil.

I'm just going on what is in the Wikipedia article. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr_\(...ns_%26_Dragons\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr_(...ns_%26_Dragons))

I'm a first edition guy who added some 2nd edition stuff to his homebrew.

Mr. Teapot

04-19-2009 02:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10249828)
Why not gnolls? They're awesome! ;)

Because if gnolls are all male, you can't do anything with the crazy gnoll/hyena genderbending weirdness.
Which is, for my money, the only reason you use gnolls instead of orcs, minotaurs or other similar beasts.

Inyssius

04-19-2009 02:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Yeah; unlike everyone else on the savage side, gnolls are technically matriarchal to begin with (with, yes, hyena weirdness).

Well, maybe not *everyone* else. I could see minotaurs and kuo-toa as being pretty egalitarian; and don't hobgoblins have a system that sort of parallels the Left and Right Hands of the Jhereg?

(With dirgesingers and sorceresses on the one side, and, you know, stabbing people on the other.)

Kiiratam

04-19-2009 03:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

My image of Gnolls has always been of wolf-men rather than hyenas. Not exactly sure why. Likewise, the gnoll and the traitor elfess weren't even the main enemies in the campaign, but they ended up on the poster instead of the red dragon and blue dracolich. Go figure.

JRM

04-19-2009 03:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10254842)

I'm just going on what is in in the Wikipedia article. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr_\(Dungeons_%26_Dragons\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr_(Dungeons_%26_Dragons))

I'm a first edition guy who added some 2nd edition stuff to his homebrew.

Nothing wrong with that, my heart leans more towards 1E too.

Looking at that Wikipedia article I think I see what caused the confusion - the 'Society' subsection that mentions Satyr's being CN isn't part of the 4E entry, that's in a different subsection ('Publication History'). I guess the author is referring to D&D Satyrs in general.

EDIT: the link to the wikipedia article Mikelibrarian gave was broken when I tried it, so I fixed the one quoted in this post (Well, at least it worked at the time of posting).

The Last Conformist

04-19-2009 04:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10254978)

Yeah; unlike everyone else on the savage side, gnolls are technically matriarchal to begin with (with, yes, hyena weirdness).

Now I've got this just plain wrong concept in my head of an all-male race of matriarchalists. Yessir, we really *do* have to be antinomian sociopathic barbarians till a female turns up to boss us around, and nossir, no female of our race has been seen in the past few millennia.

(How come they haven't died out long ago? Why, their racial deity, firmly convinced that apostates who live outside female control have no place in the afterlife, forcibly reincarnates them as soon as they die. And none of this silly being *reborn* stuff, the reincarnates just materialize somewhere close to their corpse.)

Kiiratam

04-19-2009 06:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

That, Conformist, is delicious. I salute you!

Sleeper

04-19-2009 07:55 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kiiratom (Post 10254060)

A doomsday plot by satyrs? We can do that. There's the obvious: a massive mob of satyrs has descended on a metropolis during the seasonal festivities. While many of them spur the festival to greater heights of decadence, a small task force transplants dryad oaks in a perimeter about the city. Between the satyrs and the dryads (and korred to deal with pesky fortifications via their spell-like abilities), the entire city is charmed. At this point, there's a lovely collection of pliable individuals, just waiting for the mastermind to step out of the shadows (the Fey Lords? An Archdruid? Pan?).

Strip out the motive force of a mastermind, and that reminds me a bit of the basic plot behind Paul Czege's old experimental *Bacchanal* RPG. Which is set in the city of Puteoli, circa 61 A.D., during a hot summer. The kind of sticky season where passions flare, lovers meet and quarrel, and enemies plot. And in this season the god of wine and less polite things descends on the Roman metropolis, and life become even headier as random hookups and improbable romances spread. How do you find your friends and escape when the whole city is doing its best to make Caligula's best parties look downright puritanical? When the city is riddled with tempestous and meddling once-removed Greek gods, more spoiled frat boys than divinities worthy of reverence, trying to top each other by driving mortals to excess?

Let a few satyrs loose in a typical D&D city, and they could do the same thing.

noisms

04-20-2009 07:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10255781)

Strip out the motive force of a mastermind, and that reminds me a bit of the basic plot behind Paul Czege's old experimental Bacchanal RPG. Which is set in the city of Puteoli, circa 61 A.D., during a hot summer. The kind of sticky season where passions flare, lovers meet and quarrel, and enemies plot. And in this season the god of wine and less polite things descends on the Roman metropolis, and life become even headier as random hookups and improbable romances spread. How do you find your friends and escape when the whole city is doing its best to make Caligula's best parties look downright puritanical? When the city is riddled with tempestous and meddling once-removed Greek gods, more spoiled frat boys than divinities worthy of reverence, trying to top each other by driving mortals to excess?

Let a few satyrs loose in a typical D&D city, and they could do the same thing.

In a way that reminds me of a Star Trek episode. Not any episode in particular, but can't you just imagine Spock and Kirk (or Picard and Riker, if you prefer) trying to escape from some pathologically hedonistic city on a distant planet? Obviously with some rational explanation for the descent into madness - radiation from the nearby star, some sort of viral spore, sinister aliens...

Sleeper

04-20-2009 08:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10260322)

In a way that reminds me of a Star Trek episode. Not any episode in particular, but can't you just imagine Spock and Kirk (or Picard and Riker, if you prefer) trying to escape from some pathologically hedonistic city on a distant planet? Obviously with some rational explanation for the descent into madness - radiation from the nearby star, some sort of viral spore, sinister aliens...

Just to twist it back to D&D, satyrs (and nymphs for that matter) were originally little gods. A few steps down from the big gods like Hera or Pan, but not all that different in concept. And what are they gods of?

Satyrs and nymphs might be the incarnations of mindless abandon. And when a city gets too decadent, enough spiritual energy collects, and things start to change. The leisure class start developing hooves, growing hair, or regaining their youthful figures. They become immortal, eternal. Living in the eternal Now, they lose the ability to think of tomorrow, to plan.

The labor classes and slaves might flee the cities, leaving them to decay as their former rulers lose themselves in the moment. What would the city look like in a hundred years, or a thousand? Crumbling stone, overgrown with green, stripped of valuables, traces of rotted finery, and notorious as a stopping point for caravans and other travelers who don't always return.

Or, for a generation or two, a loyal sub-class might try to keep up appearances. Warforged, perhaps, taking over the diplomatic and trade roles, and making justifications for their hedonistic masters. Trying to hide the problem, perhaps looking for a cure or alternately making sure things don't change so the reins of power remain in their hands. With warforged filling the role of the robot masters, this would resemble certain (u/dys)topian sci-fi stories like *Logan's Run*.

sim_james

04-20-2009 08:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

If satyrs are little gods, might there not be an NPC cleric of the satyrs?

6inTruder

04-21-2009 05:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10260397)

Just to twist it back to D&D, satyrs (and nymphs for that matter) were originally little gods. A few steps down from the big gods like Hera or Pan, but not all that different in concept. And what are they gods of?

Satyrs and nymphs might be the incarnations of mindless abandon. And when a city gets too decadent, enough spiritual energy collects, and things start to change. The leisure class start developing hooves, growing hair, or regaining their youthful figures. They become immortal, eternal. Living in the eternal Now, they lose the ability to think of tomorrow, to plan.

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don't always return.

Or, for a generation or two, a loyal sub-class might try to keep up appearances. Warforged, perhaps, taking over the diplomatic and trade roles, and making justifications for their hedonistic masters. Trying to hide the problem, perhaps looking for a cure or alternately making sure things don't change so the reins of power remain in their hands. With warforged filling the role of the robot masters, this would resemble certain (u/dys)topian sci-fi stories like Logan's Run.

That's wicked cool! Now I'm hoping for Nymphs in the 4edMM2.

DanSolo

04-21-2009 05:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10260428)
If satyrs are little gods, might there not be an NPC cleric of the satyrs?

Can you be a cleric serving yourself? That sounds like an Enron type flow of energy from god to worshipper...

EDIT: Oops, I misread that, but it's still an interesting idea... all satyrs being clerics of each other! Sort of a magical energy pyramid scheme. :-)

Mr. Teapot

04-21-2009 08:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10260428)
If satyrs are little gods, might there not be an NPC cleric of the satyrs?

NPC, heck. PC cleric of satyrs. Hello, new character concept.

Mr. Teapot

04-21-2009 08:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10262453)
Can you be a cleric serving yourself? That sounds like an Enron type flow of energy from god to worshipper...

In 2nd ed? Yeah, but you only get up to 3rd level spells. Maybe only 2nd level ones, I forget.

Later editions you can worship whatever you damn well please and get spells (or prayers for the really new wave).

Sleeper

04-21-2009 08:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

In Greek myth, priests didn't get superpowers. Instead, gods lurked invisibly and nudged spears thrown by their favorites, who were usually the heroic slaughter-hundreds-in-the-name-of-glory types or just really, really pretty. Not priests. The most an actual worshipper could hope for was a horrifically petty act of spite and revenge if someone really ticked off their god. Say by killing a hundred vestals, or urinating on the god's statue.

Now imagine a small god with that kind of intimate relationship with his congregation. Sure, you're the worshipper. But the faun or nymf's always over there, frolicking. Granting favors to anyone pretty or well-muscled who wanders by. Creeping them out, most likely. A stalker is a stalker, regardless of their divine status. Just ask Daphne.

randomgamer8466

04-21-2009 10:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10252928)

There's always the possibility that the lady doesn't want to return I guess.

Once you go Satyr, you won't come back later.

...

Once you go Faun, you damn well stay gone.

noisms

04-22-2009 09:48 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Scorpion

As usual for animal entries, 'Scorpion' here only refers to giant varieties. It's accompanied by a nice, naturalistic illustration.

You get a lot of bang for your XP buck with giant scorpions. Their claws do 1-10 points of damage per round after grabbing a target, with only one chance of escape (BB/LG) *per combat*, and their stings are save-or-die. They can also go into a stinging frenzy as they approach death, which gives them effectively two attacks per round with the tail. Combined with decent armour class, for 650 XP that ain't bad.

Giant scorpions attack 95% of the time - what they do otherwise isn't specified.

Large and Huge Scorpions

I might have mentioned this before, but in my mind Huge sounds bigger than Giant. But in AD&D it isn't. Odd. Anyway, these are essentially smaller varieties (2' and 4' respectively) which have slightly weaker stings and pincers.

demiurge1138

04-23-2009 02:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10269967)

Scorpion

Giant scorpions attack 95% of the time - what they do otherwise isn't specified.

Opera.

rex monday

04-23-2009 06:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10271155)

Opera.

I was going to say tea party.

But an operatic singing competition might be better.

DanSolo

04-23-2009 06:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10271155)

Opera.

Surely Scorpions play melodic hard rock?

MadWritter

04-23-2009 09:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10269967)

Scorpion

Giant scorpions attack 95% of the time - what they do otherwise isn't specified.

3% eating. 2% sleeping. Enough said, dudes.

6inTruder

04-23-2009 09:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10272059)

Surely Scorpions play melodic hard rock?

Depends, are the winds changing?

Kakita Kojiro

04-23-2009 09:06 AM

I was reading the [wiki Scorpion](#) article, with vague memories that scorpions basically get cooked through their exoskeletons by sunlight. Hence why they hide under rocks and in shoes and such. Which would be a bit of a problem for Large Huge Giant Scorpions, one would think.

However I got completely distracted after reading that some scorpions are born with two [tails](#). How cool is that? Plus, you know, *stinging frenzy* x 2!

6inTruder

04-23-2009 09:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10272660)

However I got completely distracted after reading that some scorpions are born with two tails. How cool is that? Plus, you know, stinging frenzy x 2!

This. I want THIS in the new MM.

demiurge1138

04-23-2009 10:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MadWriter (Post 10272630)
3% eating. 2% sleeping. Enough said, dudes.

There are three things you need to know about scorpions.

1. Scorpions are arachnids
2. Scorpions fight 95% of the time!
3. The purpose of scorpions is to flip out and fight adventurers.

Sleeper

04-23-2009 11:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10272660)
*However I got completely distracted after reading that some scorpions are born with two tails. How cool is that?
Plus, you know, stinging frenzy x 2!*

Why stop there? Introduce the flail scorpo-flail, with 3 to 8 stingers wildly swinging around as it advances on the party. Or the porcu-stinger, that appears to be just a bundle of scorpion tails slowly waddling forward because the body is hidden under hundreds of hooked poison-injectors.

Ragnarok_Engine

04-23-2009 11:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10253089)
Hey, I just noticed that 'celebration' write up says it includes fauns - are we talking baby deer or Mister Tumnus type creatures here? If the latter, Satyrs are essentially the same thing. If the former, it makes me fear the revelry is even more perverted than I first thought!::eek:

Ah, like good ol' Sodomy the Lawn Gnome? :D

<http://www.thoughtviper.com/INEXOB/images/111598.jpg>

:eek:

MadWriter

04-23-2009 06:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10273064)
There are three things you need to know about scorpions.
1. *Scorpions are arachnids*
2. *Scorpions fight 95% of the time!*
3. *The purpose of scorpions is to flip out and fight adventurers.*

Those last two are for ninjas, not Scorpions!

Inyssius

04-23-2009 06:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10273158)
Or the porcu-stinger, that appears to be just a bundle of scorpion tails slowly waddling forward because the body is hidden under hundreds of hooked poison-injectors.

I'm... **almost** certain that this monster already exists. I think its name is nigh-unpronounceable, and it lives in the Underdark.

The Last Conformist

04-23-2009 09:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MadWriter (Post 10274151)
Those last two are for ninjas, not Scorpions!

And thus was born the totally rad (as in dozens of sieverts per hour to anyone within 10') ninja scorpion.

Sleeper

04-23-2009 10:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10274167)

*I'm... **almost** certain that this monster already exists. I think its name is nigh-unpronounceable, and it lives in the Underdark.*

Then I counter with... the *porcu-stingerang*!

This waddling little clacker covered with dozens of scorpion tails *flings* its stingers. They whistle as they spin through the air, and since they're shaped like little boomerangs those that miss circle around and return to the beastie, who catches them with its upraised tail stubs.

Human kids play with scorpions. Grabbing them by their tails, throwing them at dogs, or among the pigs. Children can be the cruelest of all monsters. What about really big kids? A pair of cloud giant whelps, capturing 6 foot long scorpions. Holding them by their tails, laughing as they twist and squirm. Thundering toward the village, where they tower over the houses, before dropping the scorpions in the middle of the crowded market. Chortling and laughing with glee as the humans and goblin merchants flee like ants. What does the party do? The titanic kids are probably out of your league, much less the risk of parental retribution. But those poor villagers with chitinous daggers pumping poison into their faces and bellies. Something must be done.

demiurge1138

04-24-2009 02:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by MadWriter (Post 10274151)

Those last two are for ninjas, not Scorpions!

No, no. Ninjas fight all the time. Scorpions, only 95% of the time.

ESkemp

04-28-2009 10:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The number of heraldic beasts that make their way into full-fledged monsters always makes me want to design some sort of high chivalric realm with gallant knights, sinister sorcerers and tulgey woods all over the place. In such a place, the hybrid beasties aren't the creations of mad wizards: maybe they're just fey, which would suit nicely. Orlando-infused D&D, essentially.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by ESkemp (Post 10293620)

The number of heraldic beasts that make their way into full-fledged monsters always makes me want to design some sort of high chivalric realm with gallant knights, sinister sorcerers and tulgey woods all over the place. In such a place, the hybrid beasts aren't the creations of mad wizards: maybe they're just fey, which would suit nicely. Orlando-infused D&D, essentially.

I've often thought about doing that. For a while I was actually trying to develop my own system for such a setting, based around tarot cards and whist. I think somebody will end up using Swords & Wizardry or somesuch to do a high-chivalry game.

Kakita Kojiro

04-28-2009 11:16 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10292767)

Maybe the ball is made out of lead, so it's too heavy to swim with, throw or kick?

*No, it's made out of iron. The Atlanteans latest craze is a new sport that finally finds a use for the mysterious metal spheres that rain down from the naval battles of the surface folk. They call this game **canonball**, because it must always be refereed by a high-ranking Sea Priest.:o*

Sounds a lot like [Octopush](#), actually. if you add itty-bitty hockey sticks.

... And I *am* a sea-adventuring player, BTW. :D

The Last Conformist

04-29-2009 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Rolzup (Post 10290738)

Ah, the Sea-Bishop!

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...2px-Merman.jpg>

Going by that Medieval belief system, I've often toyed with the idea of pitting a bunch of PCs against a desperate pack of "Sea-Adventurers" who've ventured onto land (with the aid of baroque magic, like a Helmet of Terrestrial Action) in hopes of recovering some lost aquatic treasure.

The text says "Marine man, of the bishop kind, captured in the Baltic Sea in AD 1531".

noisms

04-29-2009 06:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Selkie

This particular section of the MM feels veritably thronging with little-used water-based monsters. Here's another one - a seal-like being which can change into a human being for a week at a time and roam about on land. They like to pillage shipwrecks for useful items or trade goods, have a liking (and weakness) for fine wine, and "fear the wrath of the sea should they ever use their powers for ill."

I've never ever ever seen a Selkie in a game. Surprising, actually, because they seem ready-made for use in an adventure - perhaps as underwater guides for characters exploring a shipwreck, or for the topic we were just discussing - gangs of water-based adventurers roaming the surface world for Some Reason. Thereupon their interests could either clash with the PCs or fit together. Job's a good 'un.

One idea for a reason why selkies would want to go to the surface is thrown up by the entry: "...selkie representatives lobby heavily whenever local overworlder environmental issues threaten selkie existence". But this seems like one of those anachronistic PETA-girl-esque modern-day-viewpoint-injection items which you often see in this tome and which, frankly, I don't get at all excited by.

Any ideas, oh sage-like readers?

Ratoslov

04-29-2009 08:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)
Any ideas, oh sage-like readers?

How's their kung-fu? Strong? Or weak?

YojimboC

04-29-2009 09:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Is "lobby heavily" PETA-girl code for "attack with pointy things and slaughter the overlanders"? 'Cuz that would be cool. And at least a variation on the Sahuagin raiding just to be assholes; Selkies do it to stop POLLUTION!

DMH

04-29-2009 10:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Selkies should have been described as some sort of fey. Give them some nasty druid spells (like spike growth, spike stones and entangle) and they are ready to be ecoterrorists. Think of the poor farmer who's field has become deadly because of a variant entangle that lasts for weeks. Or cast spike growth on the grazing field for the livestock. Spike stones works well for cities.

Heck, those 3 spells are all they need to disrupt or destroy nations.

Kapten

04-29-2009 11:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)

Selkie

One idea for a reason why selkies would want to go to the surface is thrown up by the entry: "...selkie representative lobby heavily whenever local overworlder environmental issues threaten selkie existence". But this seems like one of those anachronistic PETA-girl-esque modern-day-viewpoint-injection items which you often see in this tome and which, frankly, I don't get at all excited by.

Well it seems more like common sense than PETA-stuff to me. If the "overlanders" take all the fish, it seems reasonable that the selkies want them to stop.

noisms

04-30-2009 12:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 10297963)

Well it seems more like common sense than PETA-stuff to me. If the "overlanders" take all the fish, it seems reasonable that the selkies want them to stop.

I didn't mean it was PETA-stuff per se, just that it is like the PETA stuff inasmuch as it smacks of wanton anachronistic injection of real world political issues into a game which was only ever supposed to be about people with pointy ears and dragons. Personally I find that tendency *really annoying*, but I know I hardly speak for everyone on the matter. ;)

Putting it in terms of 'overlanders taking all the fish' is fine with me. It's framing the matter in terms like "selkie representatives lobby heavily whenever local overworlder environmental issues threaten selkie existence" which I can't stand. It all sounds a bit too much like selkie Greenpeace to me. And I have bad experiences with that kind of political-issue-gaming.

YojimboC

04-30-2009 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

On the other hand... can you imagine the king getting kick backs from the selkie lobby to curtail the excesses of fishermen? So the fishermen pool their limited resources to hire a band of cutthroat mercenaries (read as: the player characters) to hunt down and rub out those damn do-gooding selkies?

Kakita Kojiro

04-30-2009 01:46 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)

One idea for a reason why selkies would want to go to the surface is thrown up by the entry: "...selkie representative lobby heavily whenever local overworlder environmental issues threaten selkie existence". But this seems like one of those anachronistic PETA-girl-esque modern-day-viewpoint-injection items which you often see in this tome and which, frankly, I don't get at all excited by.

Any ideas, oh sage-like readers?

PETA-girl just isn't really trying to put a good PETA spin on things. Otherwise bands of selkies would be roaming the coastal towns, clubbing baby humans to death for the supple leather.

Now *that's* a plot hook.

Sleeper

04-30-2009 02:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10298066)

I didn't mean it was PETA-stuff per se, just that it is like the PETA stuff inasmuch as it smacks of wanton anachronistic injection of real world political issues into a game which was only ever supposed to be about people with pointy ears and dragons. Personally I find that tendency really annoying, but I know I hardly speak for everyone on the matter. ;)

While hardly true to its folkloric origins, incorporating (even exploring, in the spec-fic sense) modern elements in a fantasy setting is part of the modern genre. Let's see.

After a few continents sank beneath the waves, the fertile heartlands of a few empires were turned into ever-expanding deserts, and a handful of permanent giant boiling storms that transformed the lands they crossed were created by petty jealousies, spite, mad experiments, and of course dire revenge, the powers of the world got together to police that sort of thing.

"Powers of the world" being archmages, of course. Gnome mind-shapers in their invisible towers, elven glamourists under the mystic hills that serve as portals to their extraplanar realms, bombastic human scholars. Sorcerers as old as the hills, and liches who have transcended mortal limits. And a few of the "lesser" races, with sufficient arcane power. The half-spawn of a demon lord or two, bound to the mortal realm. An elder djinn

vizier. The most knowledgeable of the great wyrms. That kind of thing. The real powers, behind the meat-shields of paladins, warriors, armies, and empires.

They set up a parliament, with a squabbling and largely ineffective lower body composed of representatives elected during the once-a-decade magemoots (a week-long event set in a different inaccessible place everytime, where the wizards meet to show off and party, and yes, vote); and a select upper body composed primarily of immortals who have finagled their way into a permanent seat of power.

They take little interest in temporal politics. Sack a few cities? Go right ahead. We might notice when the history books catch up in a couple hundred years. But they keep a keen eye on certain things. Magical developments, particularly of the contagious or "Mortals-Were-Not-Meant-To-Know" varieties (necromancy and summoning, oftentimes). Threats that impact their domain as a whole (the whole world, from their perspective), whether a rapidly-spreading empire, an invasion of demons, or an impending ecological disaster.

The lesser delegates are often given missions to investigate a particular impending problem, or just to keep an eye out in a general geographical area or field of study. They have sleeper agents or spies in every major university, and their more active agents are ad hoc magistrates who serve as the heads of magical strike teams that track down rumors, ask a lot of blunt questions, do a lot of breaking and entering, poking their noses in places where they aren't wanted, and generally make a (often-fatal) nuisance of themselves.

They also reportedly solicit input. Informers, who never learn who their contact is unless things blow up in their face. They use blind drops. Messages. Leave a note on birch bark in a certain ring of stones in a particular forest, and maybe *someone* will see it. Bulletin boards in cities, whispered words on certain cliffs. Most of these storied means of communication are probably just nonsense, words thrown in the wind. But perhaps not all of them?

The selkies held a conch shell to their hearts, and tossed it into the Black Current, which whirled it away to whatever Sargasso lies at the end of the fast-spinning vortex. There, someone read their hearts' deepest fear trapped in the shell's spiraled nacreous maze. The lobby was successful. A hooded agent responded. Set up seat in the selkie king's personal chambers, and demanded all kind of exotic foods and other sensual pleasures.

After the first three servants were turned into a dusky three-winged tern, a wharf rat with vestigial hands, and a bronze piercer -- species not noted for their ability to thrive (or even survive) underwater -- the selkie courtiers started jumping. After a week or two, this hedonistic fop started demanding information, in addition to the usual requests like a thousand fresh black cherries plucked from the grove of the Titans.

Random information, yes. "The third word from the third page of the diary of princess Forsynea", "the number of organs missing from the fallen bird under the shadow of the rakshasan obelisk on the road between Theb and Arten", "the complete works of Sallicore Thear". But it's a start. Maybe just maybe the council will act. Maybe the dark tide from the shore, that is starving the undersea races, will be staunched.

demiurge1138

04-30-2009 02:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10297565)
Selkies should have been described as some sort of fey.

In 3.x, at least, they were.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)

Selkie

This particular section of the MM feels veritably thronging with little-used water-based monsters.

Well it's hardly surprising that the alphabetical Monstrous Manual includes a lot of Sea monsters in the section beginning with "Se-".

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)

I've never ever ever seen a Selkie in a game. Surprising, actually, because they seem ready-made for use in an adventure - perhaps as underwater guides for characters exploring a shipwreck, or for the topic we were just discussing - gangs of water-based adventurers roaming the surface world for Some Reason. Thereupon their interest could either clash with the PCs or fit together. Job's a good 'un.

I vaguely remember including a selkie in an D&D adventure once, but no-one realized she was a selkie so that was a bit of a bust. If I recall correctly she was a background character in a port they got a bit of info from.

So, selkie bards, the information brokers of the oceans? They're great gossips and singers you know, even worse than merfolk, and they venture onto land just out of curiosity and to spread and pick up rumours, much of which they pick up "between the sheets" since they are very promiscuous while ashore, since they can not become pregnant from liaisons with overlanders.* Only the most jealous selkie mates or zealous selkie priests raise any objection to this practice, and it helps create friendly 'contacts' in the overworld.

*That's not true according to some real-world legends about folks marrying selkies, but what the heck.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10297017)

Any ideas, oh sage-like readers?

My first idea on looking at the selkie entry was "that selkie illustration is really freaky-looking, a seal with semi-human arms and legs" I prefer my selkies to look all-seal most of the time. Maybe they can smoothly shapechange from seal to seal-man to human, and only become seal-men when they want manipulative hands?

One interesting titbit it that it says "the selkie transformation is not a spell or **magical effect**." I wonder how that works, are they like AD&D doppelgangers* with an extraordinary malleable physiology, only one that specialises in the seal to human spectrum? Presumably the human form they adopt is specific to the selkie, they can't imitate a particular individual.

*waves to Kakita and points at the D&D "dopple-" spelling, cackling evilly.:D;)

Oh, and I'm reminded of the seals in GURPS Fantasy II - The Madlands. These are just regular-looking seals with human intelligence and speech, but some have learned how to cast magic after reading a magical system engraved upon an underwater cliff face. They occasionally agree to team up with the coast-dwelling humans to catch fish in return for a share of the spoils, and spend a lot of time trying to convince them that orca are Evil Incarnate so the humans should go hunting killer whales.

Kakita Kojiro

05-01-2009 02:03 AM

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10301179)

**waves to Kakita and points at the D&D "dopple-" spelling, cackling evilly.:D;)*

:p

At least you didn't faux-Latin pluralize it. "The dopplegangi are ninjae!" might well make my head asplode.

Sleeper

05-01-2009 02:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10301179)

*One interesting tidbit it that it says "the selkie transformation is not a spell or **magical effect**." I wonder how that works, are they like AD&D dopplegangers* with an extraordinary malleable physiology, only one that specialises in the seal to human spectrum? Presumably the human form they adopt is specific to the selkie, they can't imitate a particular individual.*

D&D's definition of what is magical and what is not has always been inconsistent and illogical. This probably reached its apex in 3E, where what exactly is affected by an *anti-magic shell* is spelled out. Without magic, giant unaerodynamic creatures like dragons can still fly, high-level monks can speak intelligibly to any creature with a language, and golems can still operate.

JRM

05-01-2009 10:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10302883)

D&D's definition of what is magical and what is not has always been inconsistent and illogical. This probably reached its apex in 3E, where what exactly is affected by an anti-magic shell is spelled out. Without magic, giant unaerodynamic creatures like dragons can still fly, high-level monks can speak intelligibly to any creature with a

language, and golems can still operate.

Yup, and a 3E monk's spell resistance still works in an *anti-magic shell*. That's a useful trait!;)

Actually, the 3E *anti-magic field* is pretty consistent. Golems still operate because once created by magic their existence as Constructs does not necessarily require continuous supernatural forces. ("The [*antimagic field*] spell has no effect on golems and other constructs that are imbued with magic during their creation process and are thereafter self-supporting (unless they have been summoned, in which case they are treated like any other summoned creatures).")

In other words, once you've turned that hunk of stone into a giant medieval robot operated by a enslaved elemental, it's still a giant medieval robot operated by a enslaved elemental when its in an antimagic effect, like a *wall of iron* is physically present "in reality" once conjured, so doesn't vanish in an *antimagic field* ("The effects of instantaneous conjurations are not affected by an antimagic field because the conjuration itself is no longer in effect, only its result.").

The flying colossal beasties is a bit more difficult to explain. Suggestions on a postcard?

KromeLizard

05-01-2009 10:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10305930)

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The flying colossal beasties is a bit more difficult to explain. Suggestions on a postcard?

Why would aerodynamics even have to apply to a dragon? I don't really understand the urge to apply real world science to fantasy. Of course a dragon can fly without magic, it has wings!

Sleeper

05-02-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kromelizard (Post 10305947)

Why would aerodynamics even have to apply to a dragon? I don't really understand the urge to apply real world science to fantasy. Of course a dragon can fly without magic, it has wings!

I see the problem as more fundamental. In the real world's myths, legends, folklore, and superstition, magic was a fundamental part of everything. Some things were more numinous than others, you could certainly strip away glamours or spells, and wizards can lose their powers, but the idea that magic is an external force that can be extracted (and by implication the default state of most creatures is "magicless") is a modern conception. *The Last Unicorn* becoming a horse, for instance.

And with dead magic zones, anti-magic and even magic resistance, D&D applies the concept very inconsistently. Sometimes, they use the folkloric version of magic as an essential part of a creature's being. Sometimes, they use the modern version, where magic is an external force that can be subtracted. The result is an inconsistent hodge-podge that makes no sense from either world view.

JRM

05-02-2009 09:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kromelizard (Post 10305947)

Why would aerodynamics even have to apply to a dragon? I don't really understand the urge to apply real world science to fantasy. Of course a dragon can fly without magic, it has wings!

No particular reason, some of us just find it amusing to consider that shadowy area betwixt magic and science, where physics and metaphysics mingle and spawn bizarre chimera.

As for dragons, there are D&D dragons that don't have wings, but can still fly (mostly based on Asian versions of the legendary beast, with a few originals like the Mist Dragon).

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10307306)

I see the problem as more fundamental. In the real world's myths, legends, folklore, and superstition, magic was a fundamental part of everything. Some things were more numinous than others, you could certainly strip away glamours or spells, and wizards can lose their powers, but the idea that magic is an external force that can be extracted (and by implication the default state of most creatures is "magicless") is a modern conception.

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I don't have such a problem with that myself, I find such effects no less unsuitable for a fantasy milieu than folklore that demons cannot enter consecrated ground, or that trolls vanish if touched with an iron horse-shoe.

If forced to get down to the crunch I guess I would not be too bothered by having two (or more!) conflicting world views, there's no reason that any given magical world view has to be the one and total truth of reality. Indeed, conflicting world-views are legion in real-world beliefs about magic so why should a role-playing game restrict itself to one?

Oh, and were you talking about Beagle's novel *The Last Unicorn*? If I recall correctly she was never turned into a horse. She did meet a farmer who was so wrapped in mundanity he **saw** her as a horse, and the travelling-show witch (whose name temporarily escapes me) gave her the experience of being mortal through an illusion, but she was not a powerful enough sorceress to actually transform her. Of course, Schmendrick did manage to polymorph the unicorn into a human, but even though she was mortal she still had some magical attributes.

KromeLizard

05-03-2009 01:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10307306)

I see the problem as more fundamental. In the real world's myths, legends, folklore, and superstition, magic was a fundamental part of everything. Some things were more numinous than others, you could certainly strip away glamours or spells, and wizards can lose their powers, but the idea that magic is an external force that can be extracted (and by implication the default state of most creatures is "magicless") is a modern conception. The Last Unicorn becoming a horse, for instance.

And with dead magic zones, anti-magic and even magic resistance, D&D applies the concept very inconsistently. Sometimes, they use the folkloric version of magic as an essential part of a creature's being. Sometimes, they use the modern version, where magic is an external force that can be subtracted. The result is an inconsistent hodge-podge that makes no sense from either world view.

It is inconsistent only if you accept that, in the D&D worldview, "magicless" is a state equivalent to being constrained to what is possible in the real world.

Inyssi

05-03-2009 01:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

So, dragons die horribly under their own weight. Or vanish entirely?

JRM

05-03-2009 06:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssi (Post 10310827)

So, dragons die horribly under their own weight. Or vanish entirely?

Nah, they turn into sapient Tyrannosaurs in *antimagic shells*, that's why no one's reported what happens.;

TO paraphrase the Order of the Stick "A dragon without magic is still a dragon."

Kakita Kojiro

05-04-2009 01:34 AM

Some clever wizard needs to invent *Newton's Greater Antimagic Shell* -- just for the amusing mayhem of watching flying dragons crash to the ground, giants collapse under their own improbable weight, rust monsters starve, etc...

Sleeper

05-04-2009 02:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kromelizard (Post 10310818)

It is inconsistent only if you accept that, in the D&D worldview, "magicless" is a state equivalent to being constrained to what is possible in the real world.

I find it equally inconsistent with both the modern and the magical worldview. It's a hybrid, applying a mashed-up mess of modern and pre-modern concepts that makes no sense from either perspective.

An iron golem without magic should be either A) a statue, or B) impossible. The idea that you can extract the magical characteristics of a creature is inconsistent with the pre-modern perspective. *D&D's* version where a random assortment of magical and non-magical traits remain is an artifact of the game's rules, not something that makes sense when viewed at the setting level.

Coming up with a justification might be entertaining. Something that explains why a spell is able to suppress one class of characteristics, but not another class. Perhaps chi versus dimensional energies? *Anti-magic shell* just cuts off access to external sources of magic.

noisms

05-04-2009 05:50 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Shadow

A Shadow is a living (unliving, I suppose) shadow which exists partially on the Negative Material Plane. It haunts graveyards and dark places, waiting to suck the life out of trespassers - whereupon the victim becomes a Shadow himself.

There is a rather nice portrayal of Shadows as hateful of anything which reminds them of their former lives: whenever they come across treasure or belongings of a human or demihuman in their territory, they deliberately throw such items down a well or somewhere else out of sight, rather than be reminded of what they once were. A nice ready-made treasure store - if you can make your way past the near-invisible incorporeal killers who surround it.

Shadows remind me of that old Frank Trollman thread here about making a setting based on D&D rules concepts. As he put it:

Quote:

"Shadows, for instance. If even one exists, why aren't you all dead? Every time it kills a creature, be it a mighty warrior or an owl chick, a new shadow is created. They are incorporeal and therefore immune to most forms of attack and can walk through walls."

Which is a fun scenario and I suppose a D&D vision of apocalyptic horror - rather than zombies or bodysnatchers it's Shadows who are sweeping their way through human society. However I think in this case the designers could point out that Shadows seem tied to a particular territory from which they don't want to leave. (And in 2nd edition at least, it's only humans or demihumans who become Shadowised - not 'owl chicks' or whatever.)

The ecology section, as it is for most undead, is well worth reading. Not only do we have "knowledgeable sages" speculating that Shadows were created by some ancient foul curse, we also have them speculating as to the cure:

Quote:

"Attempts to remove the curse from captured shadows have all failed, thus providing more clues into the nature of the disorder. A limited wish spell proves only partially successful as the victim returns for an hour but remains insane for the duration. It has been recently speculated that a full wish, followed by a heal spell, might be capable of restoring a shadow to his former state, but again it must be emphasized that this is only a theory."

Ah, inconsistency, thy name is the AD&D 2nd edition Monstrous Manual.

Wakboth

05-04-2009 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I started D&D with BECMI, which also had shadows... but they weren't undead; just evil animate shadows!

Always preferred that, to be honest. Shadows seem kind of redundant with spectres and especially wraiths around.

Hellzon

05-04-2009 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!

Sleeper

05-04-2009 11:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Hellzon (Post 10316313)

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!

Just to play a little... what if the shadow is exactly that? I believe there is a similarly-named concept in White Wolf's old *Wraith: The Nourning*. This also corresponds to the Ancient Egyptian "ib", the part of the soul that deals with the emotions, will, and thought; though not the personality (which is the "ba". Another part of the soul is the "sheut", which refers to the physical shadow, and might make an interesting alternate name for the monster.) To mix and match horribly disparate concepts, perhaps the shadow is the will, mind, and dark emotions unrestrained by the conscience or superego. The soul is the mortality and restraint.

When the soul departs the body, in certain cases the shadow can take it over, which leads to vampires (who lack a shadow because the body has absorbed it). In other cases, a shadow can be created when the soul is stolen from the body. Perhaps shadows are the end result of the *trap the soul* spell? There might also be conditions where someone loses their shadow while living. A sort of *mirror of opposition* effect. Lose all the negative emotions (penalty to combat?), and face a strength-draining evil opposite. Another inspiration could be the horribly clawed shadowy beast that crawled from the rift in *The Wizard of Earthsea*.

JRM

05-05-2009 03:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10314006)

An iron golem without magic should be either A) a statue, or B) impossible. The idea that you can extract the magical characteristics of a creature is inconsistent with the pre-modern perspective. D&D's version where a random assortment of magical and non-magical traits remain is an artifact of the game's rules, not something that makes sense when viewed at the setting level.

Coming up with a justification might be entertaining. Something that explains why a spell is able to suppress one class of characteristics, but not another class. Perhaps chi versus dimensional energies? Anti-magic shell just cuts off access to external sources of magic.

As I said earlier, the easy explanation is that a D&D iron golem is something created by magic but not sustained by magic. It is, quite literally, a robot. It may *look* like a crude man-shaped lump of iron whose limbs flex and move in an impossible fashion, but if you had an atomic microscope you'd see the 'iron' is actually quadrillions of nanoscopic machines that link or slide across each other to give the golem pseudo-life and mobility. I doubt the mages who follow the Ancient Texts to create them realize this is how the formula imbues their creations with animation, by precise atomic manipulation. But such a task is nothing to the amazing powers of a *polymorph other* spell, which can turn a large man into a small mouse while leaving their soul and intelligence intact.

JRM

05-05-2009 04:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10316264)

Shadow

Yes, the 2E version of the Shadow is a bit of a puzzler. First, what's up with that illustration. A silhouette of a three fingered spiky humanoid? Are all shadows supposed to look like that? I doubt it!

I've assumed these monsters just look like the shadow of whoever they're spawned from, except there's no-one (or no-thing) visible to cast the shadow. So, if this is the case what creature is that picture the Shadow of? I can't offhand think of any monster that matches it, unless it's supposed to be a Shadow Demon à la the Fiend Folio and the illustrations got mixed up.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10316264)

The ecology section, as it is for most undead, is well worth reading. Not only do we have "knowledgeable sages" speculating that Shadows were created by some ancient foul curse, we also have them speculating as to the cure:

Yes that whole bit about requiring *wish* level plus magic to cure a Shadow is extremely (maybe excessively) harsh, but at least the MM's consistent in that other incorporeal undead like Wraiths and Spectres are also very hard to bring back to life, requiring a "special quest", whatever that means.

Presumably it's because the original body has been shifted into the Negative Material Plane and destroyed, while with other undead you've got some material remains to cast raise dead or resurrection on once you've 'slain' the undead.

In any case, I find it interesting that Shadows have some physical substance - how else would they be able to throw those treasures down a well? I'll also note there's no text saying Shadows are incorporeal or able to walk through walls and the like. Indeed, I remember running them as basically having a semi-solid "walking gaseous form" that could seep through doors and windows or spread out and flow across walls or ceiling like a, well, living shadow. Several times my PCs ran into the old "shadows trapped inside a hermetically sealed chamber" ploy, who rushed out once they broke the vacuum-seal on the door.

EmperorSeth

05-05-2009 01:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hey, there's an idea! What if they can't normally throw treasures, or interact with the world at all, so the reason it drains strength from enemies specifically is so they can get that strength themselves? That's as good a reason as anything to turn evil. Imagine being an incorporeal undead, able to exist but without touching anything. But there is one way to regain your ability to act on the world again, but at a cost....oh, but certainly that warm-blooded creature wouldn't mind giving up a little strength? It would do the same if it had to, after all!

noisms

05-05-2009 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10319979)

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Love it.

JRM

05-05-2009 10:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10319979)

Hey, there's an idea! What if they can't normally throw treasures, or interact with the world at all, so the reason it drains strength from enemies specifically is so they can get that strength themselves? That's as a good a reason as anything to turn evil. Imagine being an incorporeal undead, able to exist but without touching anything. But there is one way to regain your ability to act on the world again, but at a cost....oh, but certainly that warm-blooded creature wouldn't mind giving up a little strength? It would do the same if it had to, after all!

Now that's a nice notion.

Hmm... maybe Shadows can't even touch each other without drained Strength? Now I'm imagining a "doomed lovers" scenario where a pair of Shadows who were once human paramours are draining the vigour from travellers just so they can touch each others, though that's a bit of a switch from these undead's default psychology.

EDIT: My original notion was to have one of the doomed lovers a Shadow and the other remain mortal, but it seems obvious that the latter would soon enter the undead state as well, probably after the Shadow lover taps enough victims to become corporeal enough to embrace embraces its mortal lover and inadvertently drains away all of his or her Strength and hit points as well.

Mr. Teapot

05-06-2009 02:50 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10321230)

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Undead tragic lovers are always a good idea in my book. Always.

Having an adventure where you try to convince a new widow(er) to avoid the Shadow of their deceased lover before they too become a Shadow would be pretty neat. Except that this is D&D, so the PCs would likely just kill the Shadow lover.

Psychosis555

05-06-2009 03:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

This thread inspired me to track down a copy of the AD&D 2nd Ed. Monstrous Compendium, and for \$20 it was a steal. Anyone know where I can see what's supposed to be in this thing so I can find out if mine is complete or not? It's a huge binder, great for when you wanna bring a few monsters to a session. I just recently started DMing a 4e campaign and no doubt some of the ideas in this thread will be thrust upon my unwary adventurers. Imagine the horror in finding out the friendly dwarf town you've stumbled upon is actually home to cannibalistic roperdwarvers, hell bent on maintaining their secret so they can continue to feed on wary travelers who veer off the King's Road etc.

As for the subject at hand, I find these ghostly monsters interesting. I prefer skeletons or zombies to ethereal undead as all sorts of dumb stuff usually ensues trying to defeat them, but this can be half the fun of roleplaying in the right group. I'd imagine a shadow could be used as a good spy, perhaps a lich has been disturbed one too many times by foolish hero's seeking the treasures of his home, and from the last group he chose two members: one to live, but have his soul removed and used to power the lich's dread magics, and the other to die and have his soul twisted and warped into a shadow, controlling the body, but not his own so that he would not remember his original origin. The newly created shadow puppet would be sent to town and could either wreak havoc in interesting ways (sabotage, murder) or simply spy on the party and keep them wondering why this damn lich knows everything they plan.

JRM

05-06-2009 04:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10322401)

Undead tragic lovers are always a good idea in my book. Always.

Having an adventure where you try to convince a new widow(er) to avoid the Shadow of their deceased lover before they too become a Shadow would be pretty neat. Except that this is D&D, so the PCs would likely just kill the Shadow lover.

Well if they're low-level adventurers maybe they don't have magical weapons to hit the Shadow with, so it's a fearsome foe they want to avoid. Or they do kill the Shadow and the widow(er) becomes crazy for vengeance in the finest melodramatic tradition. Then if they kill him/her the widow(er) comes back as a revenant for revenge!

What's that? It's statistically implausible that the widow(er) would become a revenant. Well, in my view a DM

has to occasionally be prepared to take an attitude towards statistics resembling Humpty Dumpty's views on the meaning of words. The odds can become what you want them to be, the DM's just got to be firm with their statistics.;)

JRM

05-06-2009 04:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Psychosis555 (Post 10322662)

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Wikipedia has a list of TSR's AD&D 2nd edition monsters divided by product (Monstrous Compendiums, Monstrous Manual, Al-Qadim et cetera) you can see [here](#).

I think it's pretty accurate, at least I haven't come across any glaring omissions.

Amphimir Míriel

05-07-2009 05:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10317947)

As I said earlier, the easy explanation is that a D&D iron golem is something created by magic but not sustained by magic. It is, quite literally, a robot. It may look like a crude man-shaped lump of iron whose limbs flex and move in an impossible fashion, but if you had an atomic microscope you'd see the 'iron' is actually quadrillions of nanoscopic machines that link or slide across each other to give the golem pseudo-life and mobility. I doubt the mages who follow the Ancient Texts to create them realize this is how the formula imbues their creations with animation, by precise atomic manipulation. But such a task is nothing to the amazing powers of a polymorph other spell, which can turn a large man into a small mouse while leaving their soul and intelligence intact.

Millions of catgirls just died... I hope you're satisfied :mad:

JRM

05-08-2009 05:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Amphimir Míriel (Post 10327860)
Millions of catgirls just died... I hope you're satisfied :mad:

Humbug, catgirls are entirely scientifically plausible.;

Sleeper

05-09-2009 03:16 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10332707)
Humbug, catgirls are entirely scientifically plausible.;

Not in the wild. Only among domesticated animals would nekomimi be a desirable trait. Imagine all the catgirl shows ("best in breed", "best in show", etc) and constant public service announcements about spaying your pets.

noisms

05-09-2009 10:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The next entry is coming up. Work has been hellu busy.

JRM

05-10-2009 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10334504)
Not in the wild. Only among domesticated animals would nekomimi be a desirable trait. Imagine all the catgirl show ("best in breed", "best in show", etc) and constant public service announcements about spaying your pets.

Haven't you heard how quickly catgirls can turn feral when they lose their cushy lifestyle of being waited on paw and foot by humans? Not to mention the wildcatgirls (*Hominofelus silvestris*), most of whom have never been domesticated and would scratch a fellow's face off if they tried. Admittedly wildcatgirls are so elusive few have caught more than a glimpse of one padding for cover, maybe with a dead rabbit or chicken dangling from their mouth.

Besides which, the Society for the Emancipation of Anthropomorphic Animals is trying to outlaw catgirl shows. While some of those shows are legitimate "beauty contests", many of them were tantamount to slavery. Don't you remember all those stories of show organisers forcing catgirls to work in cathouses against their will? Of course quite a few of those despicable types have been coming to an unpleasant end recently, now the weretigers have started tracking them down.

Sleeper

05-10-2009 12:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Even the feral catgirls are easily outcompeted in the wild by *Hominopanthera tigris*, *H. onca*, and *Hominocrocata crocuta*, making the wild house "nekos" a vanishing breed outside of certain palatial Tellurian ecocontrolled estates and paraterraformed M-type asteroids.

JRM

05-10-2009 06:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10337481)

Even the feral catgirls are easily outcompeted in the wild by Hominopanthera tigris, H. onca, and Hominocrocata crocuta, making the wild house "nekos" a vanishing breed outside of certain palatial Tellurian ecocontrolled estates and paraterraformed M-type asteroids.

I disagree! Each of the theriohominids has its own ecological niche, so they aren't competing. The feral catgirls hunt rodents up to rabbit size, while members of the big-catwomen *Hominopanthera* genus specialize in ambushing big game, while *Hominocrocata* are endurance-hunters and opportunistic part-time scavengers. If anything, it's *Hominopanthera* and *Hominocrocata* who are in competition, since lion and hyenafolk often share the same habitat and prey.:o

The Last Conformist

05-10-2009 05:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hyenagirls? Big thanks for *that* image in my head ...

Sleeper

05-10-2009 06:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10339713)

Hyenagirls? Big thanks for that image in my head ...

You didn't think male gnolls relied on the *clone* spell for reproduction, did you?

In any case, the argument for separate ecological niches is largely specious. The great catgirls (or the more inclusive "big catgirls", which includes even those human-size specimens whose vocal cords are designed only to emit purrs, not roars) -- in contrast to the miniature varieties with the small braincases and thus limited

cognitive capacity beyond certain pre-programmed kawaii reactions -- share an almost identical morphology, even more so than their true feline half-cousins. A side effect of the biodesign of *Hominofelus silvestris* may have left them with the unfortunate urge to hunt and kill small, cute animals instead of the larger prey favored by their sister breeds who come standard with the Amazonia Mark VII imprint, but when spit comes to claw, they're all just opportunistic predators with nigh-identical body plans. And the slight size differential of the more loli nekos is demonstrably a competitive disadvantage, which explains the rapid diminishment of their wild population in the Sudan when the more robust breeds were introduced.

Wakboth

05-10-2009 06:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

So... will this discussion be referred back to once we hit Tabaxi and Wemic? :D

The Last Conformist

05-10-2009 07:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10339824)

You didn't think male gnolls relied on the clone spell for reproduction, did you?

I do not ordinarily think of gnolls at all.

noisms

05-10-2009 11:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Shedu

But just what she do, we don't know. A ha ha ha.

Another of those powerful good creatures for DMs to use as policemen or walking quest dispensers, I've never liked the D&D iteration of Shedu - not least because it has to be about the least fleshed-out single-monster entry in the entire MM. Less than a third of the word count is dedicated to any sort of fluff, with the rest entirely taken up with lists of psionic powers. Snore.

About the only piece of information that I think can be riffed-upon is the idea that each Shedu wears a jewelled headband, with differing precious stones according to status. Perhaps losing the jewel results in something bad? I lack enthusiasm even for this.

I'd prefer to use Shedu, like Lammasu, as stern and powerful guardians, more lawful than good, and as terrifying as they are noble. Probably as sentinels over a tomb, or gate guardians of an ancient city, who the PCs have to somehow bypass without earning their ire. It makes a difference to have good antagonists, after all.

The Last Conformist

05-11-2009 12:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10339932)
I do not ordinarily think of gnolls at all.

Actually, the roots of my reaction are marginally deeper than that. Ordinarily, the weirdness of spotted hyena, and by implication gnoll, sexual anatomy is a fact of biology, on the level spiders who eat their partners. Where it gets disturbing is where is invited to imagining hyena-women as catgirls tend to be imagined - as objects of [Perverse Sexual Lust](#).

Ginkomortus

05-11-2009 12:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10339932)
I do not ordinarily think of gnolls at all.

I think about gnolls all the time. In fact, rpg.net is only purple when I'm thinking about gnolls.

JRM

05-11-2009 02:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10339824)
*In any case, the argument for separate ecological niches is largely specious. The great catgirls (or the more inclusive "big catgirls", which includes even those human-size specimens whose vocal cords are designed only to to emit purrs not roars) -- in contrast to the miniature varieties with the small braincases and thus limited cognitive capacity beyond certain pre-programmed kawaii reactions -- share an almost identical morphology, even more so than their true feline half-cousins. A side effect of the biodesign of *Hominofelus silvestris* may have left them with the unfortunate urge to hunt and kill small, cute animals instead of the larger prey favored by their sister breeds who come standard with the Amazonia Mark VII imprint, but when spit comes to claw, they're all just opportunistic predators with nigh-identical body plans. And the slight size differential of the more loli nekos is demonstrably a competitive disadvantage, which explains the rapid diminishment of their wild population in the Sudan when the more robust breeds were introduced.*

I'm afraid you're sorely mistaken there, my dear Sleeper.

Firstly, there is more difference in size and morphology between a 120cm Catgirl and a 2 metre+ Bigcatgirl than there is between an ocelot and a jungle jaguar, two species which quite live together in the Amazonian jungle by having different niches.

Secondly, an average domestic or wild *Hominofelis* is significantly more intelligent than an average *Hominopanthera*. Not only do they have a much higher brain size to body mass ratio than the great cat women, a factor that has only been increased by domesticity as the ones with larger eyes (and hence larger heads and brains) were considered 'cuter', but they have oversized prefrontal cortexes which further increases their intelligence, similar to the cerebral features that allowed *Homo floresiensis* to manipulate fire and tools despite having a brain not much larger than a chimps. The grossly inbred 'Kawaii' miniatures are a negligible factor as far as their survival in the wild goes, since not only are these greatly in the minority amongst the catgirls that go feral, these traits are so recessive they breed out within a few generations.

Just look at the facts - a liongirl relies on its claws and fangs to bring down prey, and has nothing but its fur to keep it warm. Many catgirls in the wild will wear and even make their own clothes, not to mention knapping flint and crafting spears.

Thirdly, the Sudan in fact proved how adaptable catgirls are. *Hominofelis* is an animal evolved to live in forests and scrublands, that it could even survive in a desert plains is a remarkable achievement, especially considering those catgirls were all descended from individuals who escaped sixty years ago from a shipment of concubines sent to an Arab potentate, so they started out with no experience in the wilderness at all.

Fourthly, the smaller size of the catgirl is a competitive advantage in most circumstances since they require a much smaller supply of food to survive (and breed) than their larger relatives.

I just don't see how you can claim catgirls are ill adapted to survival when there are colonies of escaped catgirls thriving all over the world, from the alleycatgirls who roam so many of our major cities, scrounging out of dustbins and manipulating humans for food, to the many catgirls living in wilderness areas all around the world, such as the large polydactile Maine catgirl which is able to bring down a small deer, the thriving population of catgirls in the Australian outback who are helping to deal with the population explosion of bunnygirls, as the most extreme example, the thick-furred Antarctic catgirls who were foolishly taken to the Southern continent as pets and are now multiplying in numbers in the frozen north.

No, catgirls are doing very well in the wild. It's the big cats that are suffering in the survival stakes, since they require much larger territories. Even many other catfolk that are physically superior to the catgirl and hunt the same prey, such as the Canadian lynxgirl *Hominolynx canadensis* and the Eurasian lynxgirl *Hominolynx lynx*, are losing numbers in competition to *Hominofelis* because the latter, though weaker, is intelligent enough to adapt to the changes of the modern world.

Indeed, in some areas, catgirls are doing too well. While the feral catgirls have brought under control the population explosion of bunnygirls that almost destroyed that country's agriculture a few decades ago they are also wreaking havoc amongst the native wildlife, and there have been discussions about exterminating the aforementioned Antarctic catgirls, since they are too efficient at killing penguins.

Oh, and feral *Hominofelis catus* have been interbreeding with the Scottish Wildcatgirl to create a hybrid with the cunning and tool use of the former and the size and ferocity of the latter.

JRM

05-11-2009 03:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10340370)

Shedu

snip

Another of those powerful good creatures for DMs to use as policemen or walking quest dispensers, I've never liked the D&D iteration of Shedu - not least because it has to be about the least fleshed-out single-monster entry in the entire MM.

Yes, that was my reaction to the Shedu entry too. Not much there to spark the imagination. Can we get anything more from the original Mesopotamian mythology? I don't know much more about Shedu except they're often depicted as guardians at entrances (from household to city gates), their female counterpart is the lammasu, and they're associated with the Akkadian Sun god.

Hmm, maybe the party encounter a city or ancient temple guarded by a pair of Shedu who bar any creatures tainted by evil. Maybe they must prove their worth somehow to enter (Quest Time!), or some enemy just slips a "taint of evil" cursed item onto one of them and they have to deal with the consequences after the winged bull-lions start roaring warnings.

Oh no, I like this alternative better. (Assumes the Lammasu = female Shedu) A Shedu offers a good aligned party a generous reward to take over his duties guarding the Gate of X from evil forces for a moon so he can visit a Lamasu who's reached her time of the century, so the pair of them can "do their duty to perpetuate good". Naturally, they'll be plagued by malevolent forces trying to desecrate the Shedu's charge during his absence.

demiurge1138

05-11-2009 03:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

So, uh... shedu?

I completely forgot that they were originally psionic. Which is actually a pretty good idea, considering that that (and hooves rather than claws) is about all that distinguishes them from the lammasu. Also of note is the five-legged shedu - it's used in Assyrian (?) art to indicate perspective, but in the 3.x Fiend Folio, it was taken literally.

Come to think of it, shedu also weren't psionic in the Fiend Folio, were they?

JRM

05-11-2009 03:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10339859)

So... will this discussion be referred back to once we hit Tabaxi and Wemic? :D

Maybe it will, maybe it won't.:cool:

Although judging by your avatar you'd be biased in favour of the hyenagirls. ;)

Hmm, come to think of it, if I apply the same criteria to my avatar it implies I prefer gorillagirls!:eek:

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10340944)
So, uh... shedu?

I completely forgot that they were originally psionic. Which is actually a pretty good idea, considering that that (and hooves rather than claws) is about all that distinguishes them from the lammasu. Also of note is the five-legged shedu--it's used in Assyrian (?) art to indicate perspective, but in the 3.x Fiend Folio, it was taken literally.

Come to think of it, shedu also weren't psionic in the Fiend Folio, were they?

They didn't actually do that did they ... trots off to check his copy of the 3E FF ... oh dear grief they did!

Hmm, maybe the four-legged ones are Lesser Shedu and the five-legged ones are Greater Shedu? I'll leave the "or they're just glad to see you" jokes to others.;

By the way, both the 2E and 3E illustrations for the Shedu are hardly inspiring. Had a bit of trouble deciding which one I like the best, but the 2E version is ahead by a nose, its wings are rather badly drawn and have a tacked-on look but I think the head's a lot better. It looks properly proportioned and has a thoughtful countenance, as opposed to the goofy ears and startled expression of the 3E version.

Sleeper

05-11-2009 04:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

(Trumping the tedium of point-by-point replies by responding to a random piece.... :p)

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10340891)

Firstly, there is more difference in size and morphology between a 120cm Catgirl and a 2 metre+ Bigcatgirl than there is between an ocelot and a jungle jaguar, two species which quite live together in the Amazonian jungle by having different niches.

Once again, the use of fringe cases and exceptions do not prove a general point. The big catgirl you're obliquely referring to is obviously the Twmpanian B-Series LIGER, a combat model competing with the Armagorilla, Pekinorka, and other more popular designs to fill the infantry niche. The B-series was an experimental attempt to break into a mature market with a radical new design, but despite the ballyhoo that preceded its roll out, the sales were telling: barely a blip on the deep radar. In fact, the B-Series was canceled last month when the stakeholders voted to execute the board due to dismal sales; the demands of postmodern warfare favor parahumans based on social animals of extraordinary size and strength. The true catgirls are gracile, not robust, as a simple scan of the memetimarket clearly demonstrates. Excluding the two outliers (both toy-sized miniatures), the pre-vat mass of the biotype specimen of the 25 most popular breeds varies by less than 7%.

Mikaze

05-11-2009 04:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The Shedu and Pathfinder's Buraq remind me of this problem that's vexed me far longer than it really should. How the hell do they keep themselves so neatly groomed and well-adorned? Look at that Shedu's beard! How do they keep their hats on straight? Do they have a humanoid posse to keep them stylish? But what if the creatures in question are solitary?

Spinxes with heavy ornamentation also apply.

Some people worry over rules, some people worry over in-game morality. But *this* is the kind of thing that keeps me up at night.

JRM

05-11-2009 04:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10340944)
So, uh... shedu?

I completely forgot that they were originally psionic. Which is actually a pretty good idea, considering that that (and hooves rather than claws) is about all that distinguishes them from the lammasu. Also of note is the five-legged shedu--it's used in Assyrian (?) art to indicate perspective, but in the 3.x Fiend Folio, it was taken literally.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10341009)
Hmm, maybe the four-legged ones are Lesser Shedu and the five-legged ones are Greater Shedu?

Further on the Shedu, if I remember my last visit to the British Museum correctly some Shedu have lion's paws instead of bull's hooves. I have a vague memory that some Shedu gate-sculptures have both - i.e. three paws at the front, two hooves at the back. May be mistaken on the latter, though.

Oh, for those not familiar with the perspective thing Demiurge referred to, rather than being sculpted in the round the Mesopotamians carved Shedu gate guardians to be viewed from the front or from inside the gateway. The front-carving shows both front legs but not the hind legs, while the side-carving shows both front and side legs. Both the front and side views shared the head, breast and one front leg, but not the other front leg, with the result that the beast looks like it has five legs when viewed from an angle. If you look at **this picture** you can see the result.

Hmm, does that means that carvings of four-legged Shedu were always in flat surfaces like walls, plaques and floors. Maybe the Lesser 4-legged Shedu should gain *duo-dimensionality* as a power?

The Last Conformist

05-11-2009 04:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10341055)

Once again, the use of fringe cases and exceptions do not prove a general point.

Lions do or in the recent past have overlapped in range with leopards, cheetahs, tigers, lynxes, and a few dozen smaller cat species.

You'd be better off arguing from the girl angle. Humans tend to cohabit disastrously with other apes ...

JRM

05-11-2009 04:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10341073)

The Shedu and Pathfinder's Buraq remind me of this problem that's vexed me far longer than it really should. How the hell do they keep themselves so neatly groomed and well-adorned? Look at that Shedu's beard! How do they keep their hats on straight? Do they have a humanoid posse to keep them stylish? But what if the creatures in question are solitary?

Oh the answer to those questions is quite simple. All Shedu are expert at using their psionic powers of *body control* and *telekinesis* to keep themselves well turned out, and those that for some reason find themselves looking a bit scruffy employ *post-hypnotic suggestion* to implant the thought "the Shedu didn't have a hair out of place" into those it meets. Of course, there are stories about them using *mass domination* to enslave teams of hairdressers but that is obviously ridiculous, they are Lawful Good after all.

Sleeper

05-11-2009 04:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10341073)

The Shedu and Pathfinder's Buraq remind me of this problem that's vexed me far longer than it really should. How the hell do they keep themselves so neatly groomed and well-adorned? Look at that Shedu's beard! How do they keep their hats on straight? Do they have a humanoid posse to keep them stylish? But what if the creatures in question are solitary?

Spinxes with heavy ornamentation also apply.

Some people worry over rules, some people worry over in-game morality. But this is the kind of thing that keeps me

up at night.

Sounds like an example of social grooming. Sufficiently coordinated cooperative behavior and horse-like lips might make up for the lack of opposable thumbs. That's supported by the *Monstrous Manual*, which lists their organization as "herd". One member of the herd might take on the role of groomer or stylist, and develop an appropriate psionic discipline (and an acute fashion sense) allowing more precise control. In cases where they are cut off from their normal social network, such as when they serve as the guardian of a gate to the Abyss, they might become frustrated and develop certain pathological behaviors. Passersby might suffer unprovoked attacks both verbal and physical, malicious pranks (especially ones that compromise the personal hygiene of the victims), and other irrational, obsessive behaviors. These shedu are easily recognized by their unkempt, matted hair; untrimmed beards; and a general aura of slovenly filth. The best way to placate such an unfortunate is tactile; groom them into submission! In fact, the heroes of the shedu are wandering or questing hairdressers, who seek out any of their race compelled to serve a solitary vigil, and surprise them with a complete makeover.

JRM

05-11-2009 04:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10341115)

Lions do or in the recent past have overlapped in range with leopards, cheetahs, tigers, lynxes, and a few dozen smaller cat species.

You'd be better off arguing from the girl angle. Humans tend to cohabit disastrously with other apes ...

True enough, although as a counter argument there were long periods of hominid history when there were multiple species of "ape-men" living together in Africa. I prefer to imagine *Hominofelis* species taking a similar tack rather than the more homicidal tendencies of *Homo sapiens*. Think of all the manlike species we've got in the Monstrous Manual that somehow have avoided exterminating each other ages ago.

Inyssi

05-11-2009 04:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10341073)

The Shedû and Pathfinder's Buraq remind me of this problem that's vexed me far longer than it really should. How the hell do they keep themselves so neatly groomed and well-adorned? Look at that Shedû's beard! How do they keep their hats on straight?

"... like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. ² But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶ These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to

turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. ⁷ Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸ Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. ¹¹ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. ¹³ At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. The Seventh Trumpet ¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell—oh, bugger. Hey! You there! Fix my hat, would you? "

Well, no, I'm sure JRM has the right answer. I can't see a shedu ever interrupting his intonation for any reason. Though, if caught in an *antimagic shell*, that intonation would doubtless flow seamlessly into a discourse on hygiene and the divine right of kings.

EDIT: Damn! I was **four minutes** away from quoting the Book of Revelations in this thread's 666th post.

Sleeper

05-11-2009 05:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10341170)

*EDIT: Damn! I was **four minutes** away from quoting the Book of Revelations in this thread's 666th post.*

Fixed :)

(The deleted post is below.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10341115)

Lions do or in the recent past have overlapped in range with leopards, cheetahs, tigers, lynxes, and a few dozen smaller cat species.

You'd be better off arguing from the girl angle. Humans tend to cohabit disastrously with other apes ...

You probably realize none of my arguments are based on anything more than what's fun to write. Some of the holes are quiet deliberate; an ironclad thesis wouldn't have the same entertainment value :)

JRM

05-11-2009 05:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10341232)
Fixed :)

(The deleted post is below.)

You probably realize none of my arguments are based on anything more than what's fun to write. Some of the holes are quiet deliberate; an ironclad thesis wouldn't have the same entertainment value :)

I don't know about Inyssius, but I certainly realized we were just fooling around.

Arguing highly evolved combat forms equate to improved survivability in the wild? Hilarious! They'd never meet their grossly inflated protein and nutrient requirements by hunting & scavenging for themselves.

Not to mention that the Hildebrand convention now requires all Warbeasts to be gene modded to require an artificial coded food supplement, without which they self-destruct. It specifies a food supplement that *doesn't occur in the wild* of course, we don't want Jurassic Parks I-IX happening all over again!

Besides which, most of those GM warbeasts are so specialized and highly strung that releasing one into the wilderness and expecting it to thrive is like expecting a thoroughbred racer to be better adapted to living off the steppes than a Przewalski's Horse.

Still, I think its time to move on to debating about Sheddu hairdressers.

Hmm, maybe the aforementioned romantically inclined Sheddu seeks the party's assistance in acquiring makeover expertise, beard-pins, perfumed hair oil and other cosmetics to improve his appearance enough to win the Lamasu of his heart's desire back from a claim-jumping Androsphinx?

JRM

05-11-2009 05:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10341170)

"... like o measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. ² But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶ These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. ⁷ Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸ Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. ¹¹ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. ¹³ At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. The Seventh Trumpet ¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell—oh, bugger. Hey! You there! Fix

my hat, would you? "

Well, no, I'm sure JRM has the right answer. I can't see a shedu ever interrupting his intonation for any reason. Though, if caught in an antimagic shell, that intonation would doubtless flow seamlessly into a discourse on hygiene and the divine right of kings.

Actually, that could explain how Shedus get their hats put straight. They wouldn't have to interrupt their intonation, since they can use their mindlink power to make the request, or *dominate* a haberdasher for Greater Shedus, while keeping on talking.

Still, the apocryphal Book of Revelations does seem a bit short in the hairdressing department.:cool:

Sleeper

05-11-2009 06:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

(two posts up) Wasn't Inyssiuss :).

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10341299)

Arguing highly evolved combat forms equate to improved survivability in the wild? Hilarious! They'd never meet their grossly inflated protein and nutrient requirements by hunting & scavenging for themselves.

Not to mention that the Hildebrand convention now requires all Warbeasts to be gene modded to require an artificial coded food supplement, without which they self-destruct. It specifies a food supplement that doesn't occur in the wild of course, we don't want Jurassic Parks I-IX happening all over again!

Besides which, most of those GM warbeasts are so specialized and highly strung that releasing one into the wilderness and expecting it to thrive is like expecting a thoroughbred racer to be better adapted to living off the steppes than a Przewalski's Horse.

There you go again, missing the forest for the trees, lichen, and microbes! Where did I suggest, state, or imply that warbeasts are more competitive when reverted to their neoferal state? I was merely dismissing your rather risible contention that an amped-up battleteratite is a typical example of a catgirl! Most of the so-called warbeasts are chained to a regular diet of DNA-supplements and go to battle with a backpack full of performance-enhance drug-pumps. Not to mention that without extensive augmentation by anagathics their lifespan is measured in mere *months*. Have you ever seen a strung-out Attacorka? During a consultation in Dubai, I had the opportunity to observe the famous "hero" Kuku-a-Chu shortly after he was put out to stud; sad, sad. A mere shadow of the ravaging beast in his war footage, only weeks before. But utterly irrelevant to the present discourse, of course.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10341299)

Hmm, maybe the aforementioned romantically inclined Shedus seeks the party's assistance in acquiring makeover expertise, beard-pins, perfumed hair oil and other cosmetics to improve his appearance enough to win the Lamasu of his heart's desire back from a claim-jumping Androsphinx?

Probably futile. The androsphinx has that scruffy bad-boy (chaotic) appeal that the nice (lawful) girls go for.

demiurge1138

05-11-2009 09:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10341009)

By the way, both the 2E and 3E illustrations for the Shedu are hardly inspiring. Had a bit of trouble deciding which one I like the best, but the 2E version is ahead by a nose, its wings are rather badly drawn and have a tacked-on look but I think the head's a lot better. It looks properly proportioned and has a thoughtful countenance, as opposed to the goofy ears and startled expression of the 3E version.

Well, the Fiend Folio had the poor luck to be partially illustrated by Dennis "Crabapple" Cramer, quite possibly the worst person used in 3.x's art team. Fortunately, it was at least partially balanced out by some sublime work by Richard Sardinha and Sam Wood (his last 3e product for Wizards, I believe).

Wakboth

05-12-2009 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10340978)

Although judging by your avatar you'd be biased in favour of the hyenagirls. ;)

Who, me? *whistles innocently*

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper

Probably futile. The androsphinx has that scruffy bad-boy (chaotic) appeal that the nice (lawful) girls go for.

Err... IIRC, androsphinxes are lawful. And kind of frustrated with gynosphinxes constantly chasing them. :)

The Last Conformist

05-12-2009 06:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10341232)

You probably realize none of my arguments are based on anything more than what's fun to write.

Oh, certainly. :) I just enjoy responding as if you were serious sometimes.

Sleeper

05-12-2009 06:23 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10347641)

Err... IIRC, androsphinxes are lawful. And kind of frustrated with gynosphinxes constantly chasing them. :)

You have the dramatic conflict correct, but appear to be misremembering the alignments... they're chaotic good and neutral, respectively. :)

JRM

05-12-2009 09:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10340370)

Shedu

About the only piece of information that I think can be riffed-upon is the idea that each Shedu wears a jewelled headband, with differing precious stones according to status. Perhaps losing the jewel results in something bad? I lack enthusiasm even for this.

Continuing to riff on the hairdressing scheme, maybe Shedu society is built upon social grooming (i.e. "you comb my beard and I'll comb yours"), so the more influential Shedus are not the most powerful but those with the best makeover skills. Greater Shedus have an advantage, having more powers that have a hairdressing application, which is why they are usually high ranking. The few Greater Shedu that are ranked below sapphire are mostly those whose reputation has suffered collapse due to a horrifying disgrace like giving a colleague a perm-gone-wrong, setting fire to someshedu's beard with their hot-curlers, or those that are disinterested or untalented in social grooming, so they commit fashion faux-pas like having unkempt sideburns or wearing ear-rings that clash with their tiara.

JRM

05-12-2009 09:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10341348)

Probably futile. The androsphinx has that scruffy bad-boy (chaotic) appeal that the nice (lawful) girls go for.

Yes, as if things weren't already tough enough for the Gynosphinxes with those Crio- and Hieracosphinxes lusting after them, their beloved Androsphinxes are doing their best to shun them while making googly-eyes at those goody-four-paws Lammasu girls.

Something had better be done before the population of sphinxes collapses. The most practical solution would be to use *polymorph other* and modified *philters of love* to create more romantically inclined Androsphinxes, hence increasing the Gynosphinxes chances of being lucky in love.

noisms

05-14-2009 10:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sirine

Yet another aquatic monster. How many is this in quick succession? And nor is it a particularly good one - the Sirine is really just a kind of mermaid-lite; a hot female humanoid which hangs about in the sea and occasionally surfaces to mate with male humans. Insert obligatory Paris Hilton/Christina Aguilera/Courtney Love joke here.

Sirines can sing to charm, polymorph self, etc. etc. (the usual 'female temptress monster' arsenal) and touch to reduce intelligence. They like out of the way, uninhabited places, but occasionally long for companionship and attempt to lure male humanoids for that purpose. Presumably eventually to their death by drowning, in the case of evil Sirines, though this isn't made explicit in the text.

Other than that it's hard to find much that's inspiring in the entry. Sirines know the local area very well and can be persuaded to divulge that information - which is par for the course for this kind of creature - but there's little else to riff on. Perhaps other people have used them as some kind of tragic love interest for a player character? I don't generally 'do' romance in my games.

Inyssius

05-14-2009 10:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10357847)

Other than that it's hard to find much that's inspiring in the entry. Sirines know the local area very well and can be persuaded to divulge that information - which is par for the course for this kind of creature - but there's little else to riff on.

And, to be honest, there are a thousand thousand other more interesting entities to fill the "not-entirely-trustworthy being which can be persuaded to tell you the secret details of a patch of ocean" role.

demiurge1138

05-15-2009 03:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

It always bugged me that sirens got so diluted while harpies got the siren's schtick. Sirens should be bird-people who lure sailors to their deaths with a beautiful song. Harpies should be monstrous and foul, none of this captivating song stuff, who shit in blind people's food to punish them for offending the gods.

Mr. Teapot

05-15-2009 03:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10341118)

Of course, there are stories about them using mass domination to enslave teams of hairdressers but that is obviously ridiculous, they are Lawful Good after all.

Or so they say. But, of course, Shedus can dominate and post-hypnotic suggestion and the like anyone they please, so of course everyone thinks they're Lawful Good. If you had mind control powers, why would you let all the peons think you were a brain eating monstrosity? You would obviously erase memories, implant ideas and otherwise modify psyches until everyone thought that you were a very literal gift from the gods.

Shedus are really villains, see. Or at best self-serving neutral creatures. They guard the gates of cities so that they can control what goes in and out... not just people, but what supplies and what information passes into the populace and what is denied them. That way they can maintain control, and artificially engineer food shortages and harvests to manage the population, and pull a slice of the profits of any merchants passing in or out of the city.

But they carefully use their psionic abilities to keep their reputations spotless. Everyone in the world knows that they are beings of pure Law and Good. Because the Shedus want it that way. Within their own cities, this belief is even more extreme, and the Shedus are treated like kings, or like emissaries from the Gods. They make up whatever religious doctrines they need for their purposes, then mindcontrol some scribes into producing "ancient" holy documents proving it has always been true.

So why do they show up as Lawful and Good to alignment detecting spells? Simple: the Shedus mind controlled a couple of local illusionists, who created *amulets of false alignment*. Why did you think those headbands were important enough to take up half the flavor text on the creature?

Mikaze

05-15-2009 06:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Thinking back, the only time I remember ever coming across sirines outside the Monstrous Manual was in the second Dragonlance trilogy. Was that setting where they first popped up? Some of the fluff may have been cut out if they were Krynn-specific.(then again, considering how the MM's done with setting specific creatures so far...)

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10359252)

Harpies should be monstrous and foul, none of this captivating song stuff, who shit in blind people's food to punish them for offending the gods.

I just had the best idea for a harpy cleric/paladin PC *ever*.

Sleeper

05-15-2009 07:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

How exactly is "sirine" pronounced, anyway? Because simply considering it to be a homophone of "siren" just doesn't work for me. SEE-rine? Sir-EYE-nee?

Mikaze

05-15-2009 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

sigh-REEN, I thought.

Mr. Teapot

05-15-2009 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10359995)

How exactly is "sirine" pronounced, anyway? Because simply considering it to be a homophone of "siren" just doesn't work for me. SEE-rine? Sir-EYE-nee?

Sigh-REEN? SIGH-reen?

Sleeper

05-15-2009 07:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10360009)

sigh-REEN, I thought.

Me three. Which is actually convenient from a game standpoint, since sounds-similar not sounds-the-same is just as useful as using variant names for the same creature to fill up a bestiary with hordes of different monsters without resorting to gg-mo!-latchikkkkk or slobbertailkamoohamoohawave.

demiurge1138

05-15-2009 10:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10360009)
sigh-REEN, I thought.

Yeah, that's how I'd always heard it in my head.

Inyssius

05-15-2009 10:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10359252)
Harpies should be monstrous and foul, none of this captivating song stuff, who shit in blind people's food to punish them for offending the gods.

Yep.

Actually, I have a race of harpies who live around mountains and lightly forested regions; they're a race of elves who were punished by some sort of curse because their queen was a terrible enchantress. They're proud, they're kind of psychotic in that special way birds have, and they look fairly attractive. But they refer to themselves as "Avariel", or the Falcon's Daughters, or whatever; and if you refer to them as "harpies", never mind that this is how most of the world knows them, they will *fuck your shit the hell up*.

When my players reach the Shadowfell, they'll encounter a **true** harpy. Monstrous and foul, cut from the same cloth as the harpies in *Golden Compass*.

JRM

05-15-2009 06:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10359307)
Or so they say. But, of course, Shedus can dominate and post-hypnotic suggestion and the like anyone they please, so of course everyone thinks they're Lawful Good. If you had mind control powers, why would you let all the peons think you were a brain eating monstrosity? You would obviously erase memories, implant ideas and otherwise modify psyches until everyone thought that you were a very literal gift from the gods.

Shedus are really villains, see. Or at best self-serving neutral creatures.

Personally, I welcome our new man-lion overlords. ;)

Actually, if the creatures in the MM are at all common, it's probable that many of the humanoid city-states would be ruled by monsters. With the strength to slaughter scores of men-at-arms they'd have as dominating a role in society as, well, adventurers. And everyone knows they latter are only interested in going into holes in the ground and killing things.

Plus, the Good-aligned monsters would surely make better rulers than most human leaders. Most are Good with a capital G and many possess genius- and supergenius intelligence. The main reasons the AD&D world is not a utopian Ki-Rin theocracy is probably that (a) they are very rare and (b) they're so smart and good that fallible, sinful humanity just can't live up to their standards.

I've had a few communities that were ruled over by dragons or coatl. Ki-Rin, Lammasu and Shedu are other monsters that are likely to have a high role in a human civilization. Maybe not actual monarchs, but religious leaders of some kind.

The evil equivalent of the "Ruling Monsters" tend to be things that feed off the populace (esp. Undead such as vampires) or creatures that convert the people, or just the ruling class - I've seen plenty of scenarios were a town or city's leading guild has been converted into wererats, for example. What hope would an average commoner have against even a comparatively weak monster like a wererat? Four times their hit points and needing silver or magic to hit, a lot of them would willingly become one of the lycanthropes to get traits like that. But some communities may even be willing to accept such leadership.

The Vampire Overlords only kill a few people a month, they protect you from the plague of regular monsters (esp. the fast-spawning ones like Shadows or Ghouls) that would otherwise overwhelm you, and besides which King Vlad's been in charge for six hundred years, most everyone just accepts it as the natural order by now.

JRM

05-15-2009 06:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10360581)
Yeah, that's how I'd always heard it in my head.

Yup, I've always thought it was pronounced Sigh-reen, and that's what my dictionary says. I agree with demiurge too, Sirene is just an older form of Siren, they should really be bewitching maneating bird-women and sea-nymphs. The AD&D version is both unclassical and uninspiring, I don't remember seeing anyone ever use them in a game.

Sleeper

05-15-2009 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10361992)

I've had a few communities that were ruled over by dragons or coatl. Ki-Rin, Lammasu and Shedû are other monsters that are likely to have a high role in a human civilization. Maybe not actual monarchs, but religious leaders of some kind.

How about the shedû as the guardians of learning? Like Patience and Fortitude, the stone lions who abut the entrance to the main branch of New York City's public library, they are the keepers of the light of knowledge and wisdom. They aren't artists or inventors themselves; their brilliance takes the form of a wondrous memory (the whole speak "most human tongues" bit) and methodical patience, not the creative intuition that fuels the inventor or the discoverer. But they love conversing with great minds, and surrounding themselves with the wisdom of the ages. They listen avidly to young scholars debating on the steps, occasionally interrupting to impart a critical perspective, and encourage the budding minds of children by regaling them with stories and conundrums. Their speech is loaded with allusions to great works of the past; they are the T. S. Eliots of the spoken word.

Their custodianship has become ingrained in the prevailing society; not religious figures per se, they are still regarded with reverence and respect. They usually hold honorary positions or degrees, and royal titles. A university or college is not regarded as a true institution of learning until a bearded lion with the square face of a dwarf soars down from the sky to take up residence in the courtyard adjacent to the library. This even fits fairly well with their psionic devotions, most of which are information-related.

DMH

05-15-2009 08:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10359927)

Thinking back, the only time I remember ever coming across sirines outside the Monstrous Manual was in the second Dragonlance trilogy. Was that setting where they first popped up?

Tomb of Horror. The encounter was 2 bags and the sirine. If you talked to her, the bags vanished. If a bag was touched, the other bag and the sirine vanished. A rather lame encounter even for the meatgrinder.

Grymbok

05-15-2009 08:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10362154)

How about the shedû as the guardians of learning? Like Patience and Fortitude, the stone lions who abut the entrance to the main branch of New York City's public library, they are the keepers of the light of knowledge and wisdom. They aren't artists or inventors themselves; their brilliance takes the form of a wondrous memory (the whole speak "most human tongues" bit) and methodical patience, not the creative intuition that fuels the inventor or the discoverer. But they love conversing with great minds, and surrounding themselves with the wisdom of the ages. They listen avidly to young scholars debating on the steps, occasionally interrupting to impart a critical perspective, and encourage the budding minds of children by regaling them with stories and conundrums. Their speech is loaded

with allusions to great works of the past; they are the T. S. Eliots of the spoken word.

Their custodianship has become ingrained in the prevailing society; not religious figures per se, they are still regarded with reverence and respect. They usually hold honorary positions or degrees, and royal titles. A university or college is not regarded as a true institution of learning until a bearded lion with the square face of a dwarf soars down from the sky to take up residence in the courtyard adjacent to the library. This even fits fairly well with their psionic devotions, most of which are information-related.

That's brilliant. Hopefully I will both remember it and find a place to use it...

Sleeper

05-15-2009 10:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Steve H (Post 10362283)

That's brilliant. Hopefully I will both remember it and find a place to use it...

Thank you. I was hoping that I won't forget it, as well. I'd also use the names of two stone lions as inspiration. Shedu are named for virtues. These are sometimes reflective of the institutions or attributes they are associated with (Forethought, Memory), but may also be random or personal (Charity, Vitality).

I really like the idea of giving good monsters a place in society. They don't work very well as random monsters, and there's a limit to the number of quests they can dispense. The world also becomes more wondrous and magical when you can stumble across a monstrous beast arguing with philosophers in the town square, instead of just another random set of claws and special effects to terrorize peasants until a thug with a sword or fireball stumbles by. To work as mentors, sages, advisors, plotters-behind-the-scenes, merchants, or whatever, they need to be part of the background before they become a meaningful part of an encounter.

Even evil monsters could do with a similar makeover, at least the intelligent and social varieties. While they make fine Big Bosses and mooks in stand-alone adventures, they become richer and more complex enemies when they have a place in the established social structure. Too often their cultures are cosmetic variations on: "they delight in pain and misery", which is even more boring than it is unbelievable especially when repeated *ad nauseum*.

JRM

05-16-2009 12:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10362154)

How about the shedu as the guardians of learning? Like Patience and Fortitude, the stone lions who abut the entrance to the main branch of New York City's public library, they are the keepers of the light of knowledge and wisdom. They aren't artists or inventors themselves; their brilliance takes the form of a wondrous memory (the whole speak "most human tongues" bit) and methodical patience, not the creative intuition that fuels the inventor or the discoverer. But they love conversing with great minds, and surrounding themselves with the wisdom of the ages.

They listen avidly to young scholars debating on the steps, occasionally interrupting to impart a critical perspective, and encourage the budding minds of children by regaling them with stories and conundrums. Their speech is loaded with allusions to great works of the past; they are the T. S. Eliots of the spoken word.

Their custodianship has become ingrained in the prevailing society; not religious figures per se, they are still regarded with reverence and respect. They usually hold honorary positions or degrees, and royal titles. A university or college is not regarded as a true institution of learning until a bearded lion with the square face of a dwarf soars down from the sky to take up residence in the courtyard adjacent to the library. This even fits fairly well with their psionic devotions, most of which are information-related.

Oh I like that idea, the much admired Library Lions.

Although I would imagine these monsters would be the guardians of all kinds of benevolent institutions. Over here in the UK we've got pairs of guardian lions on all kinds of places, from Nelson's Column, through museums to the driveways of private houses.

As you say, their psionic powers are well suited to the roles of Scholar/Sage as well as Researcher/Investigator, but I would have thought that their most famous occupation is be Crime-Fighter.

They can predict crimes before they occur (*precognition*), and spot an evil-doer at a glance (*aura sight*), then watch the suspects from afar (*clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*) or from right besides them while incorporeal (*ectoplasmic form*) and *invisible*. If they are too late to prevent a crime, they can easily deduce the guilty party using *object reading* on the scene of the crime, or just force their accomplices to reveal what they know (*domination*). And there's nowhere you can flee to escape a creature with *probability travel* and *teleport*. Countless criminals have been brought to the Halls of Judgment, dangling helplessly from the jaws of the Righteous Lions.

Who knows what sins lie in the hearts of men? The Shedú knows.

Ginkomortus

05-16-2009 01:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10360010)
Sigh-REEN? SIGH-reen?

Oh I'm a Sirine, with my hair colored green
Ah come on let's take off everything,
That useless lifevest, sailor, tell me yes,
Ah come overboard, oh, come for Sirine, please.

What? They just said it's a hypnotic song. They never said what genre it is... and I sure as hell can never get Come On Eileen out of my head....

JRM

05-16-2009 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10357847)

Sirine

SNIP

Other than that it's hard to find much that's inspiring in the entry.

OK, getting back to the "trying to find something interesting to say about Sirines" part of these proceedings. There are a couple of bits and pieces that attracted my attention.

Firstly, Sirines suffer from a slight case of Ninjaitis. A lone Sirine is usually a hit dice or two tougher than the average Sirine in a group of these creatures, and none of a group of Sirenes can be as tough as the strongest solo Sirine. Why should this be? Does a group of Sirenes have to share the waterpower of an area which a lone Sirine can have all to herself? Are solo Sirenes driven away by their jealous sisters ganging up on them?

Secondly, Sirines sometimes have magical weapons, and "*javelins of lightning* are common". Where do they get these from? There's no indication they craft *javelins of lightning* themselves and they're not a very common magic item, so I doubt they scavenge them all from wrecks, especially as they're one-use only. Therefore, I deduce they trade for them.

Now, there are Greek legends of lightning bolts being crafted by Hephaestus and the greater Cyclopes, but those beings seem too high-powered for the Sirines to have dealing with. However, Storm Giants strike me as a race that has the magical craft and electrical power to easily make *javelins of lightning*, and the MM says aquatic storm giants have good relationships with mermen.

Hmm, Stormgiants and sirines have the same or very similar hair and skin colour, maybe sirines result from storm giants using a reduce power and having a very close relationship with a merperson of the opposite sex?

Perhaps a sirine who wants a *javelin of lightning* just asks mum/dad for one, or visits a lonely storm giant and uses *polymorph self* and seduction to persuade him to make one for her? She couldn't just charm it out of him, if I remember the rules correctly an AD&D *charm person* does not work on giants. (And even if it did, there's a good chance of him making the save and squashing the would-be beguiler to a pulp.)

Thirdly and finally, "they make beautiful garments from sea shells, fish skin, and seaweed" - that must take extraordinary, if not supernatural tailoring skill. Perhaps that's the source of most Sirines riches and magical items, they obtain them in payment for being tailors for wealthy sea-people? Their work could be all the rage amongst sea elf courtiers and nobility.

KoboldLord

05-16-2009 02:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10362217)

Tomb of Horror. The encounter was 2 bags and the sirine. If you talked to her, the bags vanished. If a bag was touched, the other bag and the sirine vanished. A rather lame encounter even for the meatgrinder.

It was probably intended to eat paladinhood. The sirine is enslaved, and the PCs don't get to know that they have to choose between the big bag, the little bag, or the slave. And talking her isn't enough to free her; they have to ask her to leave, which is what makes the bags vanish. So any PCs that dive for the goodies are guilty of condemning an innocent to perpetual isolation and Acererak's enslavement.

Also, the players are probably assuming that she's evil and she's going to shift shape and try to eat them at some point. How many times has the distressed damsel mysteriously locked in a room turned out to be a vampire, or a succubus, or a rakshasa, or a kleptomaniac 15th-level thief, or a thirteen-tentacled monstrosity? Turns out that this one is the real deal for a change.

JRM

05-16-2009 04:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by KoboldLord (Post 10363658)

Also, the players are probably assuming that she's evil and she's going to shift shape and try to eat them at some point. How many times has the distressed damsel mysteriously locked in a room turned out to be a vampire, or a succubus, or a rakshasa, or a kleptomaniac 15th-level thief, or a thirteen-tentacled monstrosity? Turns out that this one is the real deal for a change.

I'd be tempted to make the thirteen-tentacled monstrosity a genuine damsel in distress. Why be speciest. :)

Mikaze

05-16-2009 05:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10364094)

I'd be tempted to make the thirteen-tentacled monstrosity a genuine damsel in distress. Why be speciest. :)

Not joking: I've made it up to twelve tentacles on a damsel in distress. Never quite made it to thirteen.

The joys of ocean/seashore campaigns...

JRM

05-16-2009 06:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10364346)

Not joking: I've made it up to twelve tentacles on a damsel in distress. Never quite made it to thirteen.

The joys of ocean/seashore campaigns...

Well that's two more than most squidmaidens* have, so you weren't doing too badly. ;)

I'd have said squidgirls, but that implies the damselsquids-in-distress may be underage, which is clearly just wrong.:o

chronostrike

05-16-2009 08:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10363169)

Who knows what sins lie in the hearts of men? The Shedû knows.

Sigged. Hard. (though it is "evil lurks" rather than "sins lie." I don't know if you meant that)

Assuming you accept points, please take a "wealthy young lion-man about town" point.

Sleeper

05-16-2009 08:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by KoboldLord (Post 10363658)

It was probably intended to eat paladinhood. The sirine is enslaved, and the PCs don't get to know that they have to choose between the big bag, the little bag, or the slave. And talking her isn't enough to free her; they have to ask her to leave, which is what makes the bags vanish. So any PCs that dive for the goodies are guilty of condemning an innocent to perpetual isolation and Acererak's enslavement.

A very clumsy morality tale. We had a party that sincerely tried to rescue her, but ended up consigning her to some vague doom because of the way the dilemma was worded. I've forgotten the details, but they might have tried to throw away one of the bags (to show they didn't care), before they addressed her.

JRM

05-16-2009 06:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10364845)

Sigged. Hard. (though it is "evil lurks" rather than "sins lie." I don't know if you meant that)

Assuming you accept points, please take a "wealthy young lion-man about town" point.

Ooh, my first point!:))

[I'll honour the occasion by adding it to my sig but may not keep it, I think quotes & points can make a fellow's posts look confusing & a bit messy. But surely one can't do any harm.]

I knew the original quote knows evil, but deliberately changed it to sins for Shedu. I imagine Shedu are almost as concerned about neutral & good people breaking the Law than wicked folk being Evil, so it seemed more appropriate.

Just my two coppers, you know.

Although there are rumours of a mysterious Shedu who invisibly stalk the streets of corrupt cities, bringing fearful judgements down upon evil-doers, for whom the original wording is more appropriate.

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shedu knows.

JRM

05-17-2009 06:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10366432)

Although there are rumours of a mysterious Shedu who invisibly stalk the streets of corrupt cities, bringing fearful judgements down upon evil-doers, for whom the original wording is more appropriate.

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shedu knows.

Oh, and in case you're wondering why I said fearful rather than fearsome judgements, did I forget to mention he's a cowardly lion-man, following the Golden Road of Justice? :D

Sleeper

05-17-2009 06:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10369490)

Oh, and in case you're wondering why I said fearful rather than fearsome judgements, did I forget to mention he's a

cowardly lion-man, following the Golden Road of Justice? :D

I think your lion-man is just a straw-man covering for that creep behind the curtain.... :p

JRM

05-17-2009 08:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10369529)

I think your lion-man is just a straw-man covering for that creep behind the curtain.... :p

No, the straw-man is a different guy altogether, I hear he's teaming up with a metal-man vigilante to overthrow a cruel (or should that be Krewl?) tyrant. ;)

Sleeper

05-17-2009 08:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10369731)

No, the straw-man is a different guy altogether, I hear he's teaming up with a metal-man vigilante to overthrow a cruel (or should that be Krewl?) tyrant. ;)

No, no. I'm sure of it. The poor lion's stuffed... with straw. He's full of it, in fact. *In Toto*.

JRM

05-17-2009 09:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10369773)

No, no. I'm sure of it. The poor lion's stuffed... with straw. He's full of it, in fact. In Toto.

Well whichever it is, that lass with the *silver shoes of wishing* they hang around with is the one that evildoers should be scared off. Look what she did to the Occidental Hexmistress, that was just grisly.

EDIT: Come to think of it, she's also taken over the Winged Ape Legions, the world's wicked folk must be shacking in their boots over what she will do with them.

Sleeper

05-17-2009 09:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10369889)

Well whichever it is, that lass with the silver shoes of wishing they hang around with is the one that evildoers should be scared off. Look what she did to the Occidental Hexmistress, that was just grisly.

"I'm sorry I accidentally dropped a house on her" is not considered an acceptable use of force, whether she's a civilian or a member of Law(ful alignment) enforcement agency. Except perhaps for graduates of the Sauron Institute for the Criminally Vicious.

JRM

05-17-2009 09:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10369910)

"I'm sorry I accidentally dropped a house on her" is not considered an acceptable use of force, whether she's a civilian or a member of Law(ful alignment) enforcement agency. Except perhaps for graduates of the Sauron Institute for the Criminally Vicious.

That was what she did to the *Oriental* Hexmistress, it was positively merciful compared to her liquidation of the Occidental Hexmistress.

6inTruder

05-19-2009 07:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I made this comic a week ago (just got a scan of it) and wanted to share, from the Shadow discussion:

<http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v3...der/shadow.gif>

JRM

05-19-2009 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10375813)

I made this comic a week ago (just got a scan of it) and wanted to share, from the Shadow discussion:

Aww, that shows people are wrong to say romance is dead...

...it's clear romance is **undead**, and a stalker! :o

Those cops are going to have a tough time explaining their attitude after the lady's disappearance, but not as tough as if they find what happened to her - unless they have +1 or better magic bullets, of course.

noisms

05-20-2009 06:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Skeleton

Animated undead monsters made out of bone, as if you didn't know that already. Three kinds are detailed here - 'skeleton' (i.e. human skeleton), 'animal skeleton', and the intriguingly vague 'monster skeleton', which supposedly only ever refers to a humanoid monster (ogres, trolls and the like, one guesses) but which raises the interesting possibility of a lamia, chimera or manticore skeleton, doesn't it?

There isn't all that much to say about skeletons - as the entry itself puts it, they "have no social life or interesting habits". However, I find the idea of good clerics making skeletons, when the owners have given their consent before death, rather nice; are we to take from this that there are also good zombies, wights and ghosts out there in the world?

The best way to think of skeletons, in my opinion, is still the Ray Harryhausen way - single minded, ruthless, fast moving, grinning terrors who exist only to kill. That scene in Jason and the Argonauts is still the iconic skeleton scene, in my mind, and just how I imagine skeletons when they appear in a D&D campaign.

JRM

05-20-2009 06:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10380085)

Skeleton

SNIP

There isn't all that much to say about skeletons - as the entry itself puts it, they "have no social life or interesting habits". However, I find the idea of good clerics making skeletons, when the owners have given their consent before death, rather nice; are we to take from this that there are also good zombies, wights and ghosts out there in the world?

That only makes me imagine skeletons with a social life - sitting in a café, discussing which health service has the best osteologists and listening to poetry (well, clearly they can't visit café's to drink coffee).

Ahem

I do like the illustration of the skeleton, with its broken bones some of which have been spliced together. Clearly, the artist had heeded the text's "Unless the skeleton's remains are destroyed or scattered far apart, the skeleton can be created anew with the application of another *animate dead* spell." I imagine a lot of such recycling goes on:

"Master, adventurers have destroyed the skeletons in guard crypt three again."

"Just splint them together and toss them into the sarcophagous of necromancy Igor, and don't bother me with such trifles again!"

One curious point is that the text says giant skeletons can be made out of bugbears. If I were a bugbear I wouldn't sign up to work for an Evil Necromancer, since they could turn me from a 3+1 Hit Dice creature of doubtful loyalty into an utterly obedient and tireless 6HD servant that does the same damage, is immune to some spells, and if they get destroyed you can just patch them back together.

Hmm, how hard is it to turn monster skeletons anyway? There doesn't seem to be anything in their MM entry.

EDIT: It also raises the possibility of said necromancer hunting bugbears (or their graves) to create monster skeletons, or maybe even breeding them explicitly for that purpose - bugbear skeleton farms!

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10380085)

The best way to think of skeletons, in my opinion, is still the Ray Harryhausen way - single minded, ruthless, fast moving, grinning terrors who exist only to kill. That scene in Jason and the Argonauts is still the iconic skeleton scene in my mind, and just how I imagine skeletons when they appear in a D&D campaign.

I wonder how many D&D games haven't used that as a source of inspiration for their skeletons. The skeleton Harryhausen did for *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* is also great.

Sleeper

05-20-2009 06:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10380085)

Animated undead monsters made out of bone, as if you didn't know that already. Three kinds are detailed here - 'skeleton' (i.e. human skeleton), 'animal skeleton', and the intriguingly vague 'monster skeleton', which supposedly only ever refers to a humanoid monster (ogres, trolls and the like, one guesses) but which raises the interesting possibility of a lamia, chimera or mantichore skeleton, doesn't it?

What about skeletons that look the same, but aren't? Swap in nightmare for horse skeletons on the third day after a necromancer set a big wildfire and raised lots of animal skeletons to terrorize the local towns. How is a doppelganger skeleton different from a human skeleton? Can you tell a gnome skeleton from a halfling skeleton? After all, the average person can't tell if a skeleton is from a female or a male.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10380085)

There isn't all that much to say about skeletons - as the entry itself puts it, they "have no social life or interesting habits". However, I find the idea of good clerics making skeletons, when the owners have given their consent before death, rather nice; are we to take from this that there are also good zombies, wights and ghosts out there in the world?

An Ancient Egypt-style empire where the builders of the pyramids not only have the living workforce, but seven thousand years of dead citizens? The sheer numbers of skeletons they could mobilize would make their nation unassailable, and with a tireless workers the pyramids might literally be miles-high.

JRM

05-20-2009 06:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10380085)

However, I find the idea of good clerics making skeletons, when the owners have given their consent before death, rather nice; are we to take from this that there are also good zombies, wights and ghosts out there in the world?

Regular skeletons are always neutral in AD&D, which is usually interpreted to mean they are basically mindless automatons. Plus, the text says good clerics have to ask the deceased for permission, not that the deceased have to be good.

It does open the game up to some interesting ideas. Maybe there are societies in D&D that view corpses as discarded husks, without any spiritual connection to the soul of the deceased. The poor folk of such a culture may be quite happy to sell their bones after death. Perhaps they sign away their corpse before they die (as a death-bed effort to leave their family a legacy, or just using their bones as collateral on a loan).

In other cultures, maybe the good clerics are required by their church to use *Speak with Dead* to ask the deceased's permission before reanimating them. That may lead to a conflict if the dead spirit changes his mind after selling his corpse...

Or, how about a corrupt cleric who breaks the rules and doesn't bother with the *Speak with Dead*, or gets a pal with ventriloquism skills or the *Audible Glamour* spell to fake it, in order to create more undead servants to sell or rent out. There's definitely possibilities of a scenario in that idea - somebody claims their uncle didn't want his bones re-animated and hires the party to expose them, or a spirit starts haunting the skeletons working in the field in protest at the abuse of its bones?

JRM

05-20-2009 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10380214)

How is a doppelganger skeleton different from a human skeleton?

I'm not sure a doppelganger even has a bony skeleton. It can change its height between four feet to eight feet, so maybe its skeleton is a strange cartilage that can soften, harden, stretch and shrink at will? Or, if it does have a permanent hard skeleton, its long bones can all telescope in and out to change in length.

That reminds me, the Monstrous Manual doesn't say whether doppelgangers revert to their true form or otherwise reveal their monstrous nature when slain. Did we discuss that? Maybe a doppelganger's skeleton relaxes to floppy cartilage but its still has the external appearance of whoever it imitated, or its skeleton remains 'locked' and only dissection will reveal it was inhuman.

Sleeper

05-20-2009 07:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10380320)

That reminds me, the Monstrous Manual doesn't say whether doppelgangers revert to their true form or otherwise reveal their monstrous nature when slain. Did we discuss that? Maybe a doppelganger's skeleton relaxes to floppy cartilage but its still has the external appearance of whoever it imitated, or its skeleton remains 'locked' and only dissection will reveal it was inhuman.

Since they can imitate clothing as well, that could make for a creepy murder scene. *sniffing* "The clothes just won't come off! It's like they're... melted into him, or something." *wails* "What could have done this to my daddy?"

Kreuzritter

05-20-2009 08:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10380202)

That only makes me imagine skeletons with a social life - sitting in a café, discussing which health service has the best osteologists and listening to poetry (well, clearly they can't visit café's to drink coffee).

pfft. squaresville daddyo

"With Bony Hands I Hold My Partner

On Soulless Feet We Cross The Floor

The Music Stops As If To Answer

An Empty Knocking At The Door

It Seems His Skin Was Sweet As Mango

When Last I Held Him To My Breast

But Now We Dance This Grim Fandango

And Will Four Years Before We Rest."

finger snaps

JRM

05-20-2009 08:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10380347)

*Since they can imitate clothing as well, that could make for a creepy murder scene. *sniffing* "The clothes just won't come off! It's like they're... melted into him, or something." *wails* "What could have done this to my daddy?"*

It also makes it troublesome to try pick-pocketing a live doppelganger's belt pouch, especially as it has ESP. Oh, and best not to speculate what part of its body a doppelganger would use to imitate a belt pouch.:p

Although I suppose that would make doppelgangers very cautious about cutpurses, :eek:

6inTruder

05-20-2009 11:07 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10377502)

Aww, that shows people are wrong to say romance is dead...

*...it's clear romance is **undead**, and a stalker! :o*

Those cops are going to have a tough time explaining their attitude after the lady's disappearance, but not as tough as if they find what happened to her - unless they have +1 or better magic bullets, of course.

If I do a sequel I'll post it up ^_^

Lugh

05-20-2009 08:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10380277)

It does open the game up to some interesting ideas. Maybe there are societies in D&D that view corpses as discarded husks, without any spiritual connection to the soul of the deceased. The poor folk of such a culture may be quite happy to sell their bones after death. Perhaps they sign away their corpse before they die (as a death-bed effort to leave their family a legacy, or just using their bones as collateral on a loan).

In other cultures, maybe the good clerics are required by their church to use speak with dead to ask the deceased's permission before reanimating them. That may lead to a conflict if the dead spirit changes his mind after selling his corpse...

Or, how about a corrupt cleric who breaks the rules and doesn't bother with the speak with dead, or gets a pal with ventriloquism skills or the audible glamour spell to fake it, in order to create more undead servants to sell or rent out. There's definitely possibilities of a scenario in that idea - somebody claims their uncle didn't want his bones re-animated and hires the party to expose them, or a spirit starts haunting the skeletons working in the field in protest at the abuse of its bones?

That's actually kind of an awesome idea. You can sell your body to be used post-mortem. Sort of a strange indentured servant arrangement, except you get to enjoy your life before you have to do the work. Marry this with the concept of debtor's prisons making arrangements with local necromancers to clear debts, and you can end up with an interesting economy. The resulting undead can then be used for all sorts of tasks that humans aren't suited for, such as mining.

Of course, you would invariably get a necromancer who gets a little impatient to collect on some of his "investments"....

Yeah, I think I need to work that into my campaign world.

Sleeper

05-20-2009 09:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

What if burial rites aren't just a tool that the living use to help cope with the pain of someone passing. What if consecrating graveyards isn't just an empty ritual?

D&D is infused with magic. Things change, transform. Power exists on planes other than the material, and spirits walk the earth. What if that also affects the dead? What if the natural state of a dead body isn't eternal slumber, but a restless, walking corpse? Burial rituals are some of the oldest known religious practices. They go back at least to the neolithic. Perhaps their development was the key, the thing that allowed the birth of cities and civilization. Throughout prehistory, the countryside was haunted with incarnate and mindless ancestors. By learning how to bury and respect their dead, that terrible old world finally shambled and stumbled and died.

But still. Wars happen. Plagues. Tsunamis, earthquakes, other natural disasters. Lurking behind these tragedies is the ever-present threat of the restless dead. The first responder squads of wizards, who fly in on magic carpets and rescue flood victims hanging on to the steeple of a church, always bring along priests. The symbols of divine, whether a blanch hammer and anvil or a bloody spear, are respected by dwarves and orcs alike, as their shamans and clerics fearlessly walk in front of their massed enemies to during a lull in a melee, to bless the fallen.

Villages and towns are always founded around a cemetery. Until the area is marked, fenced off, and warded, no humanoids can or will dwell there. More remote farmsteads load the still-warm bodies of those who succumb to fever in the night onto a wagon, and brave the invisible potholes as they race towards the nearest consecrated plot. Death isn't quiet. It's grasping and awful.

Lugh

05-20-2009 10:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hmm. Sleeper, as always, you evoke powerful possibilities. But, in this case, I'm not sure I like where it is going. This almost implies that *animate dead* is actually a very focused sort of *dispel magic*, deliberately breaking the bonds put on the corpse by a priest.

No, I much prefer my dead things to just be dead. And for it to take awesome, reality-defying magic to deny the natural cycle.

ESkemp

05-20-2009 11:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10382815)

That's actually kind of an awesome idea. You can sell your body to be used post-mortem. Sort of a strange indenture servant arrangement, except you get to enjoy your life before you have to do the work. Marry this with the concept of debtor's prisons making arrangements with local necromancers to clear debts, and you can end up with an interesting economy. The resulting undead can then be used for all sorts of tasks that humans aren't suited for, such as mining.

Of course, you would invariably get a necromancer who gets a little impatient to collect on some of his "investments"....

Yeah, I think I need to work that into my campaign world.

When we were working on Hollowfaust: City of Necromancers for Scarred Lands, there was absolutely a corpse economy. Anyone who died within the city walls, by law their corpse was tithed to the ruling class of necromancers (part of the social contract that also meant the city populace was defended by the necromancers). Of course, the bones of heroes were rarer and fetched a higher price, so if a high-level PC were to die there it would probably mean having to purchase their body back for a raise, which certainly leads either to a "or maybe we'll give you this quest to go on instead" quest, or, y'know, toppling the government. (Which would be the jerk-ass thing to do.)

Also, the Bone Market was a place to hock monster parts. Good bones, intact skeletons preferred, would fetch good money from the necromancers. I think there was even some sample pricing we put in there.

I love the concept of basic animation necromancy as something that is ethically gray but morally neutral. You can just build such interesting cultures with it.

Sleeper

05-20-2009 11:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10383202)

Hmm. Sleeper, as always, you evoke powerful possibilities. But, in this case, I'm not sure I like where it is going. This almost implies that animate dead is actually a very focused sort of dispel magic, deliberately breaking the bonds put on the corpse by a priest.

No, I much prefer my dead things to just be dead. And for it to take awesome, reality-defying magic to deny the natural cycle.

Alternately, once stopped it sticks. Break the cycle, have the parish priest set the dead to rest, and they stay that way. Somnolent, still. Even if removed from consecrated ground. True, some necromancers may just harvest and harness the spontaneously occurring zombies and skeletons that spring up in the wake of tragedy, but the really nasty ones are those that break into a graveyard and revive the dead dead. These necromancers don't shatter any bonds. Because the process was interrupted. The residents of the house of six feet under are now just corpses. No, the necromancers have to do something more. They have to somehow restart the process, reboot them. Give them a jump start. How they do this is by recreating the original death, in a spiritual sense. Mending the broken cycle, so when next the moon rises, to the dead is it like the first moon after their death. And so they rise. In a way, these necromancers are the respectful ones, the ones who truly revere the natural cycles. The priests are the violators, the ones who break the chains of life... and death. The necromancers can almost be cast as the heroes, can't they? Necroterrorists for the good cause.

EmperorSeth

05-21-2009 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Of course, this just begs the question: why keep the bodies around? Why not just burn them? Or is that how you get the worse undead? Leave the bodies around, and you get a skeleton or zombie. Destroy them, and the undead get really annoyed and a wraith or specter shows up.

Sleeper

05-21-2009 05:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10383956)

Of course, this just begs the question: why keep the bodies around? Why not just burn them? Or is that how you get the worse undead? Leave the bodies around, and you get a skeleton or zombie. Destroy them, and the undead get really annoyed and a wraith or specter shows up.

And a really pissed off version, because the living desecrated their body. I like.

Mr. Teapot

05-21-2009 07:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kreuzritter (Post 10380570)
This Grim Fandango

Dabnabbit, he beat me to referencing Grim fandango after the mention of skeletons reciting poetry.

I always wanted more sentient skeletons. Or zombies, for that matter. then you could have them as actual NPCs with motivations and the like, instead of just hordes of faceless, personality-less monsters. 3rd ed's necropolitans sort of gave that option, but it could go farther.

But societies built on undead as a workforce seem like they would have a really, really big advantage over societies without a zombie workforce. Thousands more slaves, who work tirelessly and without need for food or pay, following commands with less chance of rebellion. The economic advantage alone would wipe other cultures off the planet, as other cultures had to get their own immortal tireless slave races to compete (warforged could be an option for other cultures that felt reanimating corpses was immoral but not enslaving sentient beings you created from scratch).

JRM

05-21-2009 04:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10385267)
Dabnabbit, he beat me to referencing Grim fandango after the mention of skeletons reciting poetry.

Actually, although I describe skeletons listening to poetry, I did not express who (or what) was doing the reciting ... was that the voice of Zombie Shakespeare?

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10385267)
But societies built on undead as a workforce seem like they would have a really, really big advantage over societies without a zombie workforce. Thousands more slaves, who work tirelessly and without need for food or pay, following commands with less chance of rebellion. The economic advantage alone would wipe other cultures off the planet, as other cultures had to get their own immortal tireless slave races to compete (warforged could be an option for other cultures that felt reanimating corpses was immoral but not enslaving sentient beings you created from scratch).

I agree the economic benefits are obvious. The main variable is how long a standard undead skeleton or zombie can work before it falls apart. If they are literally immortal, then you could have thousand year-old workslaves. However, I'd suspect a bog-standard undead skeleton labourer would wear out after a few years under the depredations of weather, friction and dogs wanting something to chew.

Unless there are hidden costs - if the energy that drives even mindless undead is tapped from the local life force, then your zombie armies & workteams might suck the vitality out of the soil, eventually causing crop failures and starvation. The wealthy citizens can escape dying from hunger by becoming sapient undead, but that just kills the land faster. The only solution (apart from the economically impossible one of destroying your economically essential undead labour force) is to get new, undrained land, which someone else is probably living on. Well it shouldn't be too difficult, you're got that army of zombies after all...

Well, it's all great for the necromancer-masters until a Skeletal **Spartacus** or Zombie **Toussaint Louverture** appears to inspire an Undead Revolution.

Which would be kind of neat, a localised zombie apocalypse were right is on the side of the zombies. Although it can easily go horribly wrong, with mass executions of the living that make the French Revolution's Horror look like a picnic on the beach.

JRM

05-21-2009 05:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10387104)

*Well, it's all great for the necromancer-masters until a Skeletal **Spartacus** or Zombie **Toussaint Louverture** appears to inspire an Undead Revolution.*

Which would be kind of neat, a localised zombie apocalypse were right is on the side of the zombies. Although it can easily go horribly wrong, with mass executions of the living that make the French Revolution's Horror look like a picnic on the beach.

As well as the Undead Revolution (Who presumably march under the slogan "Death to the Living" as well as "Death to the Aristos"), another idea for D&D-Style Fantasy Revolutions I've been mulling over for a few years is an **Elemental** Revolution.

Think of worlds like Eberron, with its lightning rails and golems, all animated by trapped elementals. Many, if not most, elementals are sapient creatures of Neutral alignment. What if they found a way to strike back?

Maybe the warforged discover a horrible secret. They've been lied to all along, their spirits weren't born in great magical Forges, but wrenched from the elemental planes, mind-wiped and chained into an artificial body. There could be a good reason for the Lord of Blades' hatred of mankind.

The whole infrastructure of some high-fantasy nations' civilization could turn against them, it would be like Terminators Rise of the Machines, if the machines were extraplanar monsters.

Hmm... that notion makes me want the Elemental Revolution to have been initiated and led by a titanic air golem. Ostensibly, it was created to provide fair weather for farmers and fishermen, but in truth it was a weapon of mass destruction. Sent against the nation's enemies it could raise storms and rain down hail and lightning, destroying whole fleets, cities and harvests. It could be called, oh Weathernet or something like that.:)

JRM

05-21-2009 05:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10383000)

What if burial rites aren't just a tool that the living use to help copy with the pain of someone passing. What if consecrating graveyards isn't just an empty ritual?

D&D is infused with magic. Things change, transform. Power exists on planes other than the material, and spirits walk the earth. What if that also affects the dead? What if the natural state of a dead body isn't eternal slumber, but a restless, walking corpse? Burial rituals are some of the oldest known religious practices. They go back at least to the neolithic. Perhaps their development was the key, the thing that allowed the birth of cities and civilization. Throughout prehistory, the countryside was haunted with incarnate and mindless ancestors. By learning how to bury and respect their dead, that terrible old world finally shambled and stumbled and died.

Actually the explanation is a lot less grim than that.

There is a reason for ancestor-worship.

In the Old Days before priests, when folk died their ghosts just hung around. Most acted just like they did in life, only a tiny minority actually became evil monsters bent on death, the rest just hung around pestering the living.

That's why humanity made no progress for thousands of years. If anyone tried anything new, they had a hundred generations of ghosts crowding around telling them that not how they did it back in the Good Old Days.

Then the first priest, whoever he was, came around. He showed the ghosts how to travel through the astral planes into the heavens, where it was always the Good Old Days as they remembered them to be...

...and were they'd leave the living in peace.

JRM

05-21-2009 05:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10383202)

Hmm. Sleeper, as always, you evoke powerful possibilities. But, in this case, I'm not sure I like where it is going. This almost implies that animate dead is actually a very focused sort of dispel magic, deliberately breaking the bonds put on the corpse by a priest.

No, I much prefer my dead things to just be dead. And for it to take awesome, reality-defying magic to deny the natural cycle.

Well I can't recall whether 2nd edition AD&D specified this, but in 1st edition most sapient undead were animated by damned souls and minor demons from the lower planes (in many cases the damned souls had become minor demons). These souls were not necessarily the original occupant of the body. If your PC is killed by a vampire and becomes its spawn, it's usually some Manes demon running around inside your corpse, your PC's soul is heading towards its proper reward.

Thus, the consecrated graveyards and corpse-blessings is to keep the demons out, not to quell any 'natural necromancy' as Sleeper suggests.

JRM

05-21-2009 05:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10383956)

Of course, this just begs the question: why keep the bodies around? Why not just burn them? Or is that how you get the worse undead? Leave the bodies around, and you get a skeleton or zombie. Destroy them, and the undead get really annoyed and a wraith or specter shows up.

Reminds me a little of the Rolemaster system's equivalent of the *Speak with Dead* spell. If the deceased's corpse remains, the necromancer has to cast the spell over its body to speak to its spirit. If the corpse has been destroyed, a necromancer can summon its shade wherever they are.

Anyway, if the deceased has a powerful and evil spirit I'd think they'd come back as a wraith or spectre regardless of whether their body is burnt or not. Cremation does help prevent those forms of undead that require a physical body, which is quite a long list, from Skeleton to Vampire.

Sleeper

05-21-2009 07:37 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10387250)

Well I can't recall whether 2nd edition AD&D specified this, but in 1st edition most sapient undead were animated by damned souls and minor demons from the lower planes (in many cases the damned souls had become minor demons). These souls were not necessarily the original occupant of the body. If your PC is killed by a vampire and becomes its spawn, its usually some Manes demon running around inside your corpse, your PC's soul is heading towards its proper reward.

I don't remember that in first edition, though I could be misremembering. The background of the implied world was very scattershot, and things were just snuck in without a good overview.

I do like the idea of figuring out what spirits are driving what monsters. The golems and their animating elemental spirits is a classic one. What exactly are they inside? Traditional elementals? Genies? The elemental grues that popped up in the MM2? Mephits? One of those lazy "take an animal slap on a template and call it an elemental" creatures from the MotP? Nothing seems to perfectly fit, but perhaps that's because the act of forcing a spirit into a material plane body damages the spirit. What's left is a mad, lobotomized shadow.

Another is the nightshades, from BD&D. Even if undead aren't powered by demons, the nightshades seem to have an extraplanar influence. Is the nightwalker a ritually slain cloud giant with a nalfeshnee squished inside? (Sort of reminds me of the raver spirits and the giants, which was one of the better parts of the Land.) The nightcrawler was a purple worm, and so forth. I've had a campaign outline in the back of my head for a while that uses this as a central piece.

Lugh

05-21-2009 08:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10385267)

But societies built on undead as a workforce seem like they would have a really, really big advantage over societies without a zombie workforce.

I've actually thought through this a bit. Specifically, in my campaign world, the Lich Lord Vecna swept across the world, conquering the Seven Kingdoms with his undead legions. One of the things he did is, after conquering a city, he would install a governor. A necromancer would also come along and animate all the soldiers who had died trying to protect the city. Those soldiers would be lined up in neat, tightly packed columns in a field just outside the city gate, and just stand there. The governor would have the command word to suddenly activate an entire legion of loyal, deathless minions. It served as an extremely effective reminder of who held the power in the region.

Sleeper

05-21-2009 09:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10387638)

I've actually thought through this a bit. Specifically, in my campaign world, the Lich Lord Vecna swept across the world, conquering the Seven Kingdoms with his undead legions. One of the things he did is, after conquering a city, he would install a governor. A necromancer would also come along and animate all the soldiers who had died trying to protect the city. Those soldiers would be lined up in neat, tightly packed columns in a field just outside the city gate, and just stand there. The governor would have the command word to suddenly activate an entire legion of loyal, deathless minions. It served as an extremely effective reminder of who held the power in the region.

Having them build a pyramid or cathedral or some other ostentatious structure might be a better use of their time. I'm sure weather is one of the major causes of structural decay in undead, especially in areas with lots of water and regular freeze-thaw cycles. Getting them under cover is the best way to ensure they will be available for the longer-term plans of the evil overlord, and a brooding monolithic structure filled with silent troops can be just as effective at cowing the local populace as having them get all drippy in the rain.

Mr. Teapot

05-22-2009 02:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10387250)

Well I can't recall whether 2nd edition AD&D specified this, but in 1st edition most sapient undead were animated by damned souls and minor demons from the lower planes (in many cases the damned souls had become minor

demons).

I'm pretty sure I just read about that in one of the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums. But heck if I can find the reference now.

Mr. Teapot

05-22-2009 03:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

[quote=JRM;10387104]Unless there are hidden costs - if the energy that drives even mindless undead is tapped from the local life force, then your zombie armies & workteams might suck the vitality out of the soil, eventually causing crop failures and starvation.[.quote]

This would have the nice side effect of making the evil necromancer's kingdom look black and twisted and desolate, like it always does in fantasy movies.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10387104)

*Well, it's all great for the necromancer-masters until a Skeletal **Spartacus** or Zombie **Toussaint Louverture** appears to inspire an Undead Revolution.*

I've wanted to play an undead revolutionary rabble rouser for a long time now. He'd believe that undead are naturally superior to the living, as shown by their various immunities, lack of need of sleep or food (some kinds of undead, anyway), etc.

Really though, it's just so I could make jokes about playing a "wight supremacist".

Lugh

05-22-2009 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10389045)

I've wanted to play an undead revolutionary rabble rouser for a long time now. He'd believe that undead are naturally superior to the living, as shown by their various immunities, lack of need of sleep or food (some kinds of undead, anyway), etc.

Really though, it's just so I could make jokes about playing a "wight supremacist".

As with any great idea, it already exists in Ankh Morpork. I don't believe they've used the "wight supremacist" line, though. I seem to recall some funny acronyms, though.

Wakboth

05-22-2009 04:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

IIRC, the Dustmen faction (stoic nihilists who thought that everyone is *already dead*; most people just haven't realized it) in *Planescape* bought people's corpses (sometimes way before the death), and animated them as workers.

JRM

05-22-2009 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10389045)

I've wanted to play an undead revolutionary rabble rouser for a long time now. He'd believe that undead are naturally superior to the living, as shown by their various immunities, lack of need of sleep or food (some kinds of undead, anyway), etc.

Really though, it's just so I could make jokes about playing a "wight supremacist".

That pun's ancient. I remember an old White Dwarf magazine having a joke with adventurers complaining that they couldn't enter the best parts of a dungeon, because it was "wights only".

Still, the phrase an undead revolutionary rabble rouser makes me think of a walking dead civil rights activist, or a ghoul seeking to unionize the zombie work-force, not a hero/anti-hero type seeking to liberate slaves á la Skeletal Spartacus.

Of course, if sapient undead get the same rights as the quick it would obviously have major long-term effects on a society. Most obviously, the undead won't retire from their jobs, so would inevitably amass most of the wealth and seniority, unless laws exist to specifically prevent it. Once a board of directors, head of a family or noble becomes an undead they are likely to remain in that post for a very long time, creating a very conservative, ossified culture. (Literally ossified, considering all the bony NPCs).

Sleeper

05-22-2009 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10391988)

Of course, if sapient undead get the same rights as the quick it would obviously have major long-term effects on a society. Most obviously, the undead won't retire from their jobs, so would inevitably amass most of the wealth and seniority, unless laws exist to specifically prevent it. Once a board of directors, head of a family or noble becomes an undead they are likely to remain in that post for a very long time, creating a very conservative, ossified culture. (Literally ossified, considering all the bony NPCs).

That's assuming undead are effectively immortal. If you're going the realistic route, you could look at tissue and bone decay. If the connective tissue and tendons rot away, does a skeleton fall down? Even if that's not true,

bones don't have an infinite lifespan. Especially without blood flowing to provide nutrients and strength and flexibility, and a protective coating of ever renewing muscle cells, bones will wear and become brittle and then shatter.

Becoming undead might be known as a "second life". A decade or so of extra activity, though by our standards it's fairly sad. Most of what makes life worthwhile is no longer possible. Then once your remains decay sufficiently, your body falls apart. This might be a bit like the heads in jars from *Futurama*. After your decade of a second life, you are put to rest on a shelf. Perhaps in a great shrine, where your descendants visit for advice, approval, and news. At least for a generation or two until you're forgotten.

With caretakers and reasonable precautions (low humidity), you might last hundreds or even thousands of years in that state. With a continuous supply of new inhabitants, the catacombs might become massive structures. The furthest shelves in the shrine would rarely if ever get living visitors. When a great-to-the-umpteenth granddaughter delves deep into the catacombs for a visit, the constant low hum of old arguments between neighbors, endlessly repeated, might die away and then surge back in a rush of noise as she is assailed on all sides by a flurry of questions and demands from the sessile residents. This might even serve as a type of living (or unliving) library, where scholars wander through the back rooms talking with Ethelred the Unready or Diogenes, assembling eyewitness accounts of historical events from dozens of witnesses. All human memory, enshrined and accessible. The calcereous Akashic Records.

JRM

05-22-2009 07:28 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10392087)

That's assuming undead are effectively immortal. If you're going the realistic route, you could look at tissue and bone decay. If the connective tissue and tendons rot away, does a skeleton fall down? Even if that's not true, bones don't have an infinite lifespan. Especially without blood flowing to provide nutrients and strength and flexibility, and a protective coating of ever renewing muscle cells, bones will wear and become brittle and then shatter.

Try enough for many undead, but even some corporeal undead have the ability to repair themselves (Liches through their necromancy, Vampires through regeneration), and the restriction will hardly affect the more spiritual undead, such as ghosts, wraiths, spectres et cetera.

Presumably if incorporeal undead suffer any ravages from time (which is uncertain) it would be a decay or their will/memory/purpose, as they slowly lose any reason to remain in existence, until finally even the lust for "life" that caused them to return from the grave itself fades. Think of Schreck in the film *Shadow of the Vampire*, who was so old he's forgotten who he was in life, left with no aims apart from surviving and the desire to sip from a German actress's neck.

Thane of Fife

05-23-2009 12:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

While I never actually used it, I once came up with the idea of [Zhardun](#). They'd basically serve as priests to guide souls into the afterlife. Those who were too sinful in life, though, would be refused, and the Zhardun would animate them into undead to redeem themselves so that they could move on.

So, adventurers would have to compete with undead for jobs, they'd see skeletons working in the fields, and so on.

I thought that meshing that culture alongside a more normal D&D game could make for some interesting conflicts.

JRM

05-23-2009 05:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10395788)

While I never actually used it, I once came up with the idea of Zhardun. They'd basically serve as priests to guide souls into the afterlife. Those who were too sinful in life, though, would be refused, and the Zhardun would animate them into undead to redeem themselves so that they could move on.

Yes, I've thought about doing something similar, based on the idea that being undead is a punishment rather than (or as well as) a way for necromancers to cheat death and amass power.

There are precedents in real-world myth (the idea that varies ghosts & ghouls are people trapped in their mortal life by their sins, the Haitian belief that zombies are people who took from their communities without giving, who are forced to labour to pay their social debt.)

Archer

05-24-2009 09:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10387104)

I agree the economic benefits are obvious. The main variable is how long a standard undead skeleton or zombie can work before it falls apart. If they are literally immortal, then you could have thousand year-old workslaves. However, I'd suspect a bog-standard undead skeleton labourer would wear out after a few years under the depredations of weather, friction and dogs wanting something to chew.

And since the undead will leave no reason to keep living peasants around, at some point the necromantic kingdom is going to have too few living people around to provide replacement undead. At that point, they would have to either import corpses (probably at black market rates, since if their neighbors had no cultural objections to necromancy they'd be doing it themselves), or arm up those skeletons and start raiding.

Mikaze

05-25-2009 05:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10389332)

As with any great idea, it already exists in Ankh Morpork. I don't believe they've used the "wight supremacist" line, though. I seem to recall some funny acronyms, though.

I don't remember any undead-supremacist groups, but there was indeed an undead rights organization fighting against vitalism.

Sorry, not "undead". I meant "differently alive".

JRM

05-25-2009 06:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Archer (Post 10399857)

And since the undead will leave no reason to keep living peasants around, at some point the necromantic kingdom is going to have too few living people around to provide replacement undead. At that point, they would have to either import corpses (probably at black market rates, since if their neighbors had no cultural objections to necromancy they'd be doing it themselves), or arm up those skeletons and start raiding.

Not necessarily. If the undead are mindless there will need to be farmers to supervise their labours. The former-peasants may live in (relative) luxury, freed from the need for back-breaking labour, fed by undead-farmed crops. They may become city dwellers, but there's no reason to assume they stop having children (unless something about having a large number of undead about inhibits fertility, as I suggested earlier). There are less pleasant possibilities, of course. In an evil necrocracy ruled by sapient undead, most of the living may be bred in pens like cattle.

s/LaSH

05-25-2009 03:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikaze (Post 10401177)

Sorry, not "undead". I meant "differently alive".

Which is a perspective all too few people take towards the persons in question. Because they're not dead, that's what the entirety of the word 'undead' means. It just so happens that most 'differently-alive' folks seem to be animated by some sort of 'anti-life' energy. Are there other sorts of energy that could be used? What about elemental or quasi-elemental energies? What about mechanical approaches? If positive and negative energies are associated with good and evil priesthoods for the most part, are there energies associated with law and chaos? And how would this whole thing tie in with turning, which seems to use positive energy?

There's a whole lot of interesting stuff in there that hasn't been explored too much. How many ways can one be differently alive?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035742)

Spies, assassins. Some good roleplaying opportunities. Defectors, traitors, deep cover sleeper agents. Trying to blend into an alien culture. Very Cold War. Finding a fake pseudo-human village like the faux-Western towns Russia built and staffed to help train spies would be eerie.

Repeated for awesome.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10035742)

Orcs have tusks. They're not fangs, they're not for eating flesh. They're for rooting out... well, roots.

I always figured they were for mating purposes...

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035798)

Not to mention there are many cultures people called "barbarian" (e.g. Roman-era Britons) who did a lot of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Yeah, orcs get teh shitty end of the stick as well PR-wise. Liek Roman-era Britons they are less litterate and less good at lying than teh dominant culture.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10035798)

(a) Orcs are mammals

Their purpose is to flip out and kill people?

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10061031)
Crap! Tried to get a post in earlier, but stupid phone ate it...

So I've kinda been waiting for owlbeats so I can bring up an old school monster what seems very much in theme with them: Eagle Lions!

Those are from a wall fresco at the palace of Knossos. Which is probably where king Minos resided. Minotaur Minos.

Betterer yet; HAWKHOUNDS!

Ultimate hunting companion.

I kinda assumed that owlbeats have sorta winglike front legs, not really flight-capable, but they can fight against grabbity for a few seconds if they jump out of a tree. And hawk hounds can leap and then glide very briefly.

To the noble classes there would be nuthin cuter looking than a hawkhound. Also I can picture lots of specialised breeds; your standard hawk/hunting dog ones, little Jack Russel/sparrowhawk ones as extra cute pounce attack predators, huge Saint Bernard/Condor ones used for rescue work, tinny little yappy dogs that jump from the rafters onto peoples' heads. And of course feral scavenger breeds liek the vulture/dingo (vulgos I guess).

sim_james

05-25-2009 09:24 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quotes out of context from about 74 pages ago are slightly confusing...

Inyssiis

05-25-2009 11:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10403903)
Quotes out of context from about 74 pages ago are slightly confusing...

Still cool, mind you. Nothing wrong with *intra*-thread necromancy, as long as you say you're doing it.

Sleeper

05-25-2009 11:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssiis (Post 10404255)

Still cool, mind you. Nothing wrong with intra-thread necromancy, as long as you say you're doing it.

You're encouraging partial *undeath*?

Like that creeping disease that eats your skin and leaves a scabby undead detritus behind?

Perhaps selective organ transmogrification, like turning your heart into a wad of cold tissue that will keep on beating and beating long after your body dies -- even if run through with a spear?

Maybe medical animation? Reviving necrotic tissue like a gangrenous limb? Or grafting on a necrothetic limb, fresh from a prisoner who was convinced to sign an organ-donor scroll by the hangman?

Or even military applications, like the brain-in-a-dead-guy super-soldiers, who have their living brain and spinal cord implanted into a composite corpse before a mission? The survivors are fully restored to their normal bodies after completion, but aren't their nightmares are said to be *horrendous*)?

Ginkomortus

05-26-2009 12:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10403628)
Betterer yet; HAWKHOUNDS!

Ultimate hunting companion.

I kinda assumed that owlbears have sorta winglike front legs, not really flight-capable, but they can fight against grabbity for a few seconds if they jump out of a tree. And hawk hounds can leap and then glide very briefly.

To the noble classes there would be nuthin cuter looking than a hawkhound. Also I can picture lots of specialised breeds; your standard hawk/hunting dog ones, little Jack Russel/sparrowhawk ones as extra cute pounce attack predators, huge Saint Bernard/Condor ones used for rescue work, tinny little yappy dogs that jump from the rafters onto peoples' heads. And of course feral scavenger breeds liek the vulture/dingo (vulgos I guess).

I once wrote up a campaign world that had four different types of "griffons."

T'asho (Ocelot/Kestrel) - One of the two griffon species to have true wings, the T'asho live almost exclusively in the marshlands of Temlosin. They stand usually from a foot and a half to two and a half feet tall at the shoulder, with dull blue kestrel-like feathering, and pale-yellow fur spotted with ash-grey rings. They hunt small deer and other prey in eyries of six to fourteen, usually composed of an elder female "mother", two to six males, and three to seven younger female "daughters", and anywhere from one to four hatchlings. Younger males tend to be solitary, eventually joining up with an eyrie once they pass puberty. "Dens" are made in the thick overgrowth of the marsh, often for decades, with the eldest "daughter" inheriting the nest upon the death of the "mother". Other "daughters" leave soon afterwards, to form their own eyries.

It is quite ironic, though, that the homelands of the quick and impatient T'asho should overlap that of the placid Temlos. They tend to avoid each other, but common danger, such as drought, marsh-fire, or a rampaging beast from the depths of the swamps will bring them to each others' aid.

Janusa (Jaguar/Eagle) - The brightly colored Janusa are the other breed of griffon with wings. The hind end of a Janusa is bright yellow, almost orange in color, with black stars of slightly longer fur, their feathered fronts are a distinctive grey-backed, with blue and white striped plumage on their chests and wings. They have large heads, with a sharply hooked beak flanked by two sharp eyes with excellent night vision, and a tall crest on the crown

of their head. Most are about two or three feet tall at the shoulder, though they tend towards the smaller. Janusa young are born in small clutches of two or three, to parents mated for life.

They live mainly in the jungles of eastern Contero Exatio, carrying out their lives in quiet contemplation. They tend to be rather vain about their appearance. Janusa are indecisive about almost everything, and constantly take more time than is required to think about their actions. Once they have a plan, though, they're quite good at executing it. They seem to have a dislike of strange humans, but those who've lived in their area for a while are usually considered to be under the "protection" of the Janusa.

Michal (Lion/Vulture) - The Michal are definitely the roughest of the griffons. They live alone in the desert Stenne lowlands at the base of the Himiatel Mountains, east of Mosa Tev Amen'l. They're not very beautiful beasts, as they are the first to admit, in their croaking, howling, growling language. Featherless heads, covered in wrinkles resembling burn-scars, on the end of long, snake-like necks, with ragged plumages (no wings) and scaly fore-talons, combined with thin, dusty-red, and short-haired hindquarters. Though they're not pleasing to look at, the Michal are very good in a scrape, which they get into often, as they're very territorial beasts. They mate three or four times in their life, the females brood, lay their eggs, give the hatchlings enough training to help them survive and then kick them out of the nest.

Michal actually get along well with humans, at least the Thamees caravans that make the trek across the Stenne. They tend to watch over the caravans on the way through, and some have even been known to trade meat for magical totems or various items that catch their interest.

Cantern (Fox/Owl) - The smallest of the griffons, and definitely the oddest, Canterns inhabit the hilly forests to the north of the Gherwen homelands, right on the border with Gàthlaürnönd. They have been known to reach a height of two feet, but most Cantern are considerably smaller. They have round owl heads, with leaf-like brown-green markings, and tan-furred fox bodies. The Cantern differ from other griffons in two ways. One, their forelegs are those of a fox, rather than talons. Two, instead of true wings, or no wings at all, they have loose folds of skin that connect their four and hind legs, in the manner of a flying squirrel. This allows them to glide from tree to tree. Male Canterns are solitary, while females form packs of three or four. During mating season, male Canterns compete for the attentions of female packs to gain the privilege of mating with all of them. Most female packs live in underground dens, where they raise their young.

Humans rarely see Cantern, and the same is true in reverse, so little is known of them, and they know little of us. They do tend to be friendly, and pick up human languages with surprising quickness.

Lukas Sjöström

05-26-2009 12:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The Elric books had both hawkhounds and vulturelions, and at least one of them was stated in the Deities & Demigods printing that still had the Melnibonéan mythos.

celebrityomnipath

05-26-2009 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10404298)

Maybe medical animation? Reviving necrotic tissue like a gangrenous limb? Or grafting on a necrothetic limb, fresh from a prisoner who was convinced to sign an organ-donor scroll by the hangman?

There was a character class called something like "Necronaught" in that "Undead!" book (exclamation mark is important). There were basically The Bionic Man, but you know, no cybernetics in faux Medieval Europe, however there are zombies...

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10404315)
I once wrote up a campaign world that had four different types of "griffons."

Now that's teh shit I am talking about!

Not sure about lionvultures though, I think they should be jackal or dingo based, to fit with the scavenger theme. Lions would be betterer as bald eagles. they would have a mane and a baldspot. Hilarious!

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lukas Sjöström (Post 10404358)
The Elric books had both hawkhounds and vulturelions, and at least one of them was statted in the Deities & Demigods printing that still had the Melnibonéan mythos.

I still hold that hawkhounds would be seen as both awesome and impossibly cute by the nobility. Imagine one of those little dogs (that people use for scaring game so that you can shoot at them), now imagine it with an eagle's head, now imagine it begging for food!

Thinking of thread necromancy, I just got to the piercer part of this thread.

I am reminded of a story I herd on this site. The "adopt a piercer" story. A dwarf had a piercer land smack on his head, then bounce off, cause he was a dwarf in ultra-heavy dwarf armour. He was about to finish it off by steping on it, but felt sorry for it, so marked a big "x" on the floor and then put it back on the ceiling over it. Then teh party started herding wandering monsters under it to feed it, and checking up on it every so often, see how it is doing, has it had a litter of baby piercers, etc. So awesome.

noisms

05-26-2009 12:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Talk amongst yourselves a bit longer. Work is hellu busy and I just have SO MUCH to say about the Giant Skeleton entry I can't find the necessary time to write it all.

Brandi

05-26-2009 01:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lukas Sjöström (Post 10404358)

The Elric books had both hawkhounds and vulturelions, and at least one of them was statted in the Deities & Demigods printing that still had the Melnibonéan mythos.

I think both were (I don't feel like digging up the old copy right now)-- the vulture lions were for sure.

Sleeper

05-26-2009 03:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10404482)

Not sure about lionvultures though, I think they should be jackal or dingo based, to fit with the scavenger theme. Lions would be betterer as bald eagles. they would have a mane and a baldspot. Hilarious!

Lions and bald eagles are both scavengers. Not exclusively of course. Lions follow around packs of hyenas and eat their leavings as often as the other way around, while Ben Franklin argued to his daughter that the U.S. bird "does not get his Living honestly" and so made an inappropriate national symbol.

Ginkomortus

05-26-2009 06:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405154)

Not sure about lionvultures though, I think they should be jackal or dingo based, to fit with the scavenger theme. Lions would be betterer as bald eagles. they would have a mane and a baldspot. Hilarious!

Eh, I went with the lion/vulture mix because I didn't want the normal lion/eagle hybrid, and I've always imagined desert lions as scrawny, mangy things, craftily scavenging what they could and following lone travelers waiting for them to die. Fits with the vulture, no? Granted, I went and turned their personality around to be helpful, if gruff, desert guides, so that's that.

celebrityomnipath

05-26-2009 06:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Oh fuck! I've just got to teh puddings section!
It's full of win!

I mean Prismatic Puddings, puddings that are prismatic! How awesome is that? Also Sticky Puddings. And Peas Puddings. Obvious puns, but awesome obvious puns.

Peasant pudding is also awesome as it is a monster that has been domesticated and, liek corn in real world, it could

spread to the point that it outnumbers its wild variety 100 to 1.

Also, time to introduce International Shave a Quaggoth Day!

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405154)

Lions and bald eagles are both scavengers. Not exclusively of course. Lions follow around packs of hyenas and eat their leavings as often as the other way around, while Ben Franklin argued to his daughter that the U.S. bird "does not get his Living honestly" and so made an inappropriate national symbol.

Yes, but those things are facts. And facts have no place in an AD&D Monstrous Manual!

Lions are courageous because sum scholar in the Middle Ages believed that, bald eagles are heroic because they look kinda awesome. And no king wants to be known as "The Vultureheart"!

demiurge1138

05-26-2009 07:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Oh man, "Vultureheart" is a great honorific for a blackguard, or cleric of murder. Going to have to use that.

Sleeper

05-26-2009 07:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10405816)

Eh, I went with the lion/vulture mix because I didn't want the normal lion/eagle hybrid, and I've always imagined desert lions as scrawny, mangy things, craftily scavenging what they could and following lone travelers waiting for them to die. Fits with the vulture, no? Granted, I went and turned their personality around to be helpful, if gruff, desert guides, so that's that.

Not sure how it happened, but you misattributed the quote you quoted. Wasn't me. :p

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10405829)

Yes, but those things are facts. And facts have no place in an AD&D Monstrous Manual!

Lions are courageous because sum scholar in the Middle Ages believed that, bald eagles are heroic because they look kinda awesome. And no king wants to be known as "The Vultureheart"!

Or have a world where idealized, heraldic (and colored solid argent and vert!) beasts live alongside the wild, natural versions of lions, leopards... and griffons.

I actually thought about that once. That summoned creatures are the idealized ones; the ones you meet in the real (or not so real) world are often quite different.

celebrityomnipath

05-26-2009 08:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10405907)

Oh man, "Vultureheart" is a great honorific for a blackguard, or cleric of murder. Going to have to use that.

Glad to be of service.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405935)

Or have a world where idealized, heraldic (and colored solid argent and vert!) beasts live alongside the wild, natural versions of lions, leopards... and griffons.

I actually thought about that once. That summoned creatures are the idealized ones; the ones you meet in the real (or not so real) world are often quite different.

That is pretty good as well. It helps to explain why nuthin makes sense. You know, if half teh animals are made by people who do not have a basic understanding of biology.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms, ages ago now, but I just read it (Post 10203292)

Body-part selling is frequently mentioned in the MM but is a very under-developed idea; often you don't even get approximate prices.

Then I can heartily recommend The Secret College of Necromancy book, for D&D 3.0.

Had basic prices and everything. It also had teh caution:

"But before your PCs rush out to sell monster corpses they should know..."*

Opps too late, they are already out the door with nets and clubs. No seriously guys, come back and read the downside of cutting up monsters for parts (largely sentient ones, if you want to make the big bucks). No wait, they're already out the door following the scent of easy money.

We put up notices around teh wizards' quarter saying "Magical monster parts: you want them, we got them!"

After we publicly killed and dismembered a tame Chimera in the town square out of stupidity, we took all those notices down.

* Then preceded to mention the many, largely illegality based, problems with an industry who's main clients are evil necromancers and mad scientists. We didn't care.

Sleeper

05-26-2009 09:40 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10406164)

** Then preceded to mention the many, largely illegality based, problems with an industry who's main clients are evil necromancers and mad scientists. We didn't care.*

Enter PETOM (pronounced "pet 'em"): People for the Ethical Treatment Of Monsters.

JRM

05-26-2009 06:09 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Curious, the thread seems to be shifting towards subjects similar to things that have floated around in my campaign.

The equivalent of hawkhounds have been gyrfalcon / wolf hybrids, used as fearsome hunting animals by elf nobles. (Not the nice kind of 'Tra La La-La' elf, but the mercurial vindictive b*****d kind of elf).

I like the idea of Saint Bernard/Condor hawkhounds for rescue work. Maybe introduce an Ancient Egyptian or South American theme, since both those folk regarded great vultures as sacred creatures.

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10403628)

To the noble classes there would be nuthin cuter looking than a hawkhound. Also I can picture lots of specialised breeds; your standard hawk/hunting dog ones, little Jack Russel/sparrowhawk ones as extra cute pounce attack predators, huge Saint Bernard/Condor ones used for rescue work, tinny little yappy dogs that jump from the rafters onto peoples' heads. And of course feral scavenger breeds liek the vulture/dingo (vulgos I guess).

JRM

05-26-2009 06:27 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10404298)

Maybe medical animation? Reviving necrotic tissue like a gangrenous limb? Or grafting on a necrothetic limb, fresh from a prisoner who was convinced to sign an organ-donor scroll by the hangman?

Been there, done that. If I remember correctly, I treated the necromantic replacement parts as alive (or at least as alive as a flesh golem), but had a poor sense of touch/taste. That resulted in a certain amount of vulgar ribaldry regarding how necromantic healing reduced the subject's ability to enjoy various forms of, ah, gratification depending upon which body parts were replaced...

JRM

05-26-2009 06:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405935)

Or have a world where idealized, heraldic (and colored solid argent and vert!) beasts live alongside the wild, natural versions of lions, leopards... and griffons.

Yes, I like the Heraldic versions of many monsters too. It also explains the neat half-and-half chimeras. The House of Lion and the House of Eagle united to spawn a new noble house which combined their coats of arms via **dimidiation**.

The husband was of the Lion House, or else the rules of heraldry would have caused the fusion to go the other way round, with the front-half of a lion and the back-half of a bird.

That was fortunate for the griffin, who is one of the few Heraldic Hybrids who did well out of the joining. Most of them can only survive outside the Platonic Cave with constant care funded by their sponsoring noble house. A strong heart would weep to see some of the Heraldic monsters, divided into quarters, sixths, sixteenth or even more parts, with no concern for how the elements match.

Such monsters as the Dog-Battleaxe-Unicorn-Ship-Horse-Castle-Eagle-Three Golden Balls chimera can only wheeze and shuffle around in the menageries of the noblemen and colleges of Heraldry.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405935)

I actually thought about that once. That summoned creatures are the idealized ones; the ones you meet in the real (or not so real) world are often quite different.

Sounds very familiar, Have we discussed the summon spells conjure Platonic creatures idea already?

JRM

05-26-2009 10:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10406556)

Enter PETOM (pronounced "pet 'em"): People for the Ethical Treatment Of Monsters.

It's about time, the free-range and wild people have long enjoyed the comforts awarded them by the sterling efforts of the Monsters for the Ethical Treatment of People movement (METOP).

Without them, all the AD&D humans and demi-humans would be in battery farms by now...;)

The Last Conformist

05-26-2009 11:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10408712)

It's about time, the free-range and wild people have long enjoyed the comforts awarded them by the sterling efforts of the Monsters for the Ethical Treatment of People movement (METOP).

The logo of METOP needs to feature a [metoposaur](#).

Wakboth

05-26-2009 11:08 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10406556)

Enter PETOM (pronounced "pet 'em"): People for the Ethical Treatment Of Monsters.

So, what would they try to rebrand the Sea Lions as? :D

Ginkomortus

05-27-2009 12:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405935)

Not sure how it happened, but you misattributed the quote you quoted. Wasn't me. :p

Yeah, that is weird, 'cause I was going to quote you, then decided to go back and quote Omnipath directly. Weird. Eerie. Ontario.

Sleeper

05-27-2009 01:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10408906)
So, what would they try to rebrand the Sea Lions as? :D

With an ad campaign featuring lots of unclothed elves ("I'd rather be naked than wear secondary market monster body parts"), I don't think anyone was paying attention to the *message*.

Strangething

05-27-2009 01:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10405935)
I actually thought about that once. That summoned creatures are the idealized ones; the ones you meet in the real (or not so real) world are often quite different.

Suddenly, the celestial template doesn't seem quite so lame.

And can I say, as a footnote, that this thread has been a huge source of inspiration for Cursed World.

celebrityomnipath

05-27-2009 06:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper, a long tiem ago, during the Cephalopods era of this thread (Post 10211360)
Because the Underdark world is ruled by denizens that long ago migrated from the cold depths of the undersea. Mobile, squishy, strangely smart squids, cuttlefish, and octopuses with convergent eyes. Largely sessile clams and mussels, oysters and barnacles. Scallops that swim by opening and closing their mouths. They have become terrestrial, or more properly subterrestrial, like their other cousins, the snails and slugs.

Yeah, sign me up for Cephalopods and Caverns, or Mollusks and Mazes!

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10408206)

*Yes, I like the Heraldic versions of many monsters too. It also explains the neat half-and-half chimeras. The House of Lion and the House of Eagle united to spawn a new noble house which combined their coats of arms via **dimidiation**.*

Warning:

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...nnacht.svg.png>

Do not fuck with this eagle, he has a sword!

Sleeper

05-27-2009 07:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10410615)

Do not fuck with this eagle, he has a sword!

I don't think he could lift his arm, much less the blade.)

Dimidation. I like that word. Though "impalement" (putting the two coats of arms next to each other instead of cutting them in half and slapping the pieces together) has a cool name, too.

Just to wander off track again, "vexillology" is the study of flags. Most fantasy worlds have knights or at least heavily armed and armored types riding around on horses. But there is often a shortage of coats of arms. They're stuck in the appendix of the occasional citybook, like an afterthought. Adventurers never seem to have them, even the supposedly noble or semi-noble. The noble *nouveaux* who earn a "name" don't sweat and gnash their teeth as they hammer out a proper design and then strut like peacocks under their new blazon. They're not worn proudly, at all times. They're not linked to anyone's honor. They're like seals or crests of modern times. A piece of heritage, of *fantasica*. Something that appears on coins. They're relics, no longer of any importance.

Why? Well, maybe they've been supplanted. If they no longer have any meaning, perhaps it's because that meaning was lost. Stripped away or leached away; it doesn't matter. But who would do this, and how? Well, who else uses symbols, signs, crests? Mages do, that's who. From *arcane marks* to Elminster's obsessions, every would-be wizard-in-training or tin-pot sorcerer or necromancer has a scribbled scrawl they call their own.

Perhaps the reason the family crests lost their power was very simple. Families just don't matter any more. Divine right, land. Power over peasants. That's all slipped away. The privilege of birth, succession, and *noblesse oblige* no longer matter. They may still go batty in decaying country manors, but they're at best just custodians, janitors. Or to go medieval, stewards and castellans. Merely minding the lands and peoples for another.

The true power shifted from the royal courts and warlords to their magists and advisors. Scrape away the surface of the geopolitical world, and all the power is in the hands of the magocracy. Rulers rule at their whim, peasants are free or unfree at their discretion, and knights (or adventurers) go on great quests at their behalf.

So instead of heraldry, we have vexillology. Not for any real reason other than it sounds nasty and potentially wizardly. Vexillards bear the logo of their master. Sometimes in cloth, sometimes as *ascintillating pattern*. Fighting folk proudly carry the mark of their liege on their shield. Adventuring bands prominently display the sign of their patron. It's woven into tapestries and appears as a signature flourish in spells.

The idea of divine right is replaced with a meritocracy based on magical potential. Feudalism is the service of

lesser magi to greater magi, who tithe magical power in the form of permanent and consumable items, spell slots, and bound servitors. Tournaments are replaced with formal magical duels where ambitious young spellcasters can prove their chops, and gain the attention of a patron who will school them in the more advanced arts.

Laws and customs bind the use of these symbols, and misuse is punished. A *wizard's mark* is like a signet ring, a seal of protection and authority. Knowing the symbols means you know who has precedence, who has what areas of talent and expertise, and what to expect. In a world ruled by wizards, vexillology becomes a weapon.

6inTruder

05-27-2009 08:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10410615)
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...nnacht.svg.png>

Do not fuck with this eagle, he has a sword!

Dude. That's like, the fucking Eagle version of Trogdor!

JRM

05-27-2009 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10408906)
So, what would they try to rebrand the Sea Lions as? :D

Well if fish are sea-kittens, then surely sea lions would be renamed sea-cubs? :)

JRM

05-27-2009 06:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10410615)
Do not fuck with this eagle, he has a sword!

I'd be more impressed if he could lift his arm off the ground without falling over, or do something about that "only fly in a circle" handicap he suffers from.

Though it makes me wonder whether Dimidation explains the Fachan. Maybe that legendary half-man monster started out as one half of a Heraldic Monster? It makes me wonder whether there are any other Half-Monsters out there, off hand I can only think of Half-Eagles.

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10411084)
Dude. That's like, the fucking Eagle version of Trogdor!

Hmm, maybe the One Armed Sword-Eagle isn't that useless a monster concept.:D

Could I bear not to give him the power of Burnination? I don't see as how I can choose not to, those peasants in their thatch-roofed cottages don't burninate themselves, you know. I'll probably have it use its single wing to fly in circles and fling razor-sharp feathers. Such a lopsided creature shouldn't be able to fly in a straight line. Wouldn't want it to be unrealistic, after all.;

celebrityomnipath

05-28-2009 01:45 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10412965)
It makes me wonder whether there are any other Half-Monsters out there, off hand I can only think of Half-Eagles.

Halflings.

Sleeper

05-28-2009 02:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10414269)
Halflings.

Hmm...

Quote:

Originally Posted by "Origin of Love" by Hedwig and the Angry Inch
*When the earth was still flat,
And the clouds made of fire,
And mountains stretched up to the sky,
Sometimes higher,*

Folks roamed the earth
Like big rolling kegs.
They had two sets of arms.
They had two sets of legs.
They had two faces peering
Out of one giant head
So they could watch all around them
As they talked; while they read.
And they never knew nothing of love.
It was before the origin of love.

The origin of love

Last time I saw you
We had just split in two.
You were looking at me.
I was looking at you.
You had a way so familiar,
But I could not recognize,
Cause you had blood on your face;
I had blood in my eyes.
But I could swear by your expression
That the pain down in your soul
Was the same as the one down in mine.
That's the pain,
Cuts a straight line
Down through the heart;
We called it love.
So we wrapped our arms around each other,
Trying to shove ourselves back together.
We were making love,
Making love.
It was a cold dark evening,
Such a long time ago,
When by the mighty hand of Jove,
It was the sad story
How we became
Lonely two-legged creatures,
It's the story of
The origin of love.
That's the origin of love.

And there were three sexes then,
One that looked like two men
Glued up back to back,
Called the children of the sun.
And similar in shape and girth
Were the children of the earth.
They looked like two girls
Rolled up in one.
And the children of the moon
Were like a fork shoved on a spoon.
They were part sun, part earth
Part daughter, part son.

The origin of love

Now the gods grew quite scared

*Of our strength and defiance
And Thor said,
"I'm gonna kill them all
With my hammer,
Like I killed the giants."
And Zeus said, "No,
You better let me
Use my lightening, like scissors,
Like I cut the legs off the whales
And dinosaurs into lizards."
Then he grabbed up some bolts
And he let out a laugh,
Said, "I'll split them right down the middle.
Gonna cut them right up in half."
And then storm clouds gathered above
Into great balls of fire*

*And then fire shot down
From the sky in bolts
Like shining blades
Of a knife.
And it ripped
Right through the flesh
Of the children of the sun
And the moon
And the earth.
And some Indian god
Sewed the wound up into a hole,
Pulled it round to our belly
To remind us of the price we pay.
And Osiris and the gods of the Nile
Gathered up a big storm
To blow a hurricane,
To scatter us away,
In a flood of wind and rain,
And a sea of tidal waves,
To wash us all away,
And if we don't behave
They'll cut us down again
And we'll be hopping round on one foot
And looking through one eye.*

celebrityomnipath

05-28-2009 04:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10215163)
Almost as good as slaad farming! (Remind me to mention that again once we're on slaads).

[Slaad farming](#), why God why?!?

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10220717)
started wondering... How Warforged feel about the rust monster?

And that, my friend, is another reason why Terminators should be built in D&D.

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10221158)
Ghouls, nothing. It's wights you have to be worried about. You get killed by a wight--and that's as easy as one punch for most of the population--you got another wight in 1d4 rounds. Ghoul fever takes a few days.

There is an interesting article on Steve Jackson's Pyramid Magazine about Wight self-perpetrating armies. Apparently it's OK because if the worst happens your party will be all wight.

celebrityomnipath

05-28-2009 07:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10254978)
Yeah; unlike everyone else on the savage side, gnolls are technically matriarchal to begin with (with, yes, hyena weirdness).

Another interesting point that I just can't let lie.

I always figured that even though Gnolls are meant to be matriarchal, you never seem to run into female ones. I think that the Gnolls that you run into are males who have basically been pushed to the edges of Gnoll lands, and that male Gnolls are scared of women. Yes, I feel that this is a reasonable assumption, given that all the pictures of obviously female Gnolls I have seen had their breasts bared, obviously for scaring male Gnolls into obedience. Well OK it was one picture, but I read a lot into it.

Therefore it is reasonable to assume that male Gnolls can be "turned" by breasts just as undead can be turned by holy symbols. Therefore it is also reasonable to assume that any party venturing into the periphery of Gnoll territory would want to take at least one pair of breasts with them (attached to a female adventurer of course; just putting them on a stick or something would be gross) and that those breasts should be with easy access for purpose of Gnoll repulsion. For example, if those emergency anti-Gnoll breasts were behind full platemail, or other proper armour, then they would be of no use. It is far better to have them protected by easily-released leather armour, preferably as little of it as possible.

Anyway, that is my theory on D&D art. The women on the covers of D&D books are just Gnoll repellent.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10273158)

Why stop there? Introduce the flail scorp-flail, with 3 to 8 stingers wildly swinging around as it advances on the party. Or the porcu-stinger, that appears to be just a bundle of scorpion tails slowly waddling forward because the body is hidden under hundreds of hooked poison-injectors.

I liek the cut of your jib sir!

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10277890)

Besides which, don't we already have multi-stingered arachnids in D&D? I vaguely recalled the vermiurge has two stings, but looked it up and it has only one, but makes up for it by four pincers. Still, I could have sworn I've seen two tailed scorpions in the game somewhere, may not have been an official product.

Obviously I'll have to resolve this potential lacuna by creating the Dopplepion - two stingers, four claws, 200% deadly

It is at this point that I am compelled to mention Leafcutter Scorpions! The moast deadly creature evar, if you are made of leaves. Four times as deadly as Leafcutter Ants!

Mr. Teapot

05-28-2009 08:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10415447)

I always figured that even though Gnolls are meant to be matriarchal, you nevar seem to run into female ones.

Of course you do. You just don't realize it. I mean, if the gnolls (like their hyena brethren) can't tell their males and females apart, why should a human be any better at it?

noisms

05-29-2009 11:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

[Sorry for the delay...]

Skeleton, Giant

Does anybody else find the picture for this one oddly....suggestive? Like the skeleton is saying, "Here, this is where my COCK would be if I still had one!!"?

Anyway.

A Giant Skeleton is not the skeleton of a giant, oh no - it is an ordinary skeleton which has been *enlarged*. So neh. It always has a fire burning in its ribcage, which is ~~for cheesy effect~~ a byproduct of the magic used to create it. It is, though, really just a big skeleton in the end, and there's not all that much to distinguish it from an ordinary-sized one other than more hit points and more damage.

As we've established I'm not a fan of setting-specific stuff in the MM, and as the final third of the entry is all about Ravenloft and things called "Radaga" and "Kartakass" that I've never heard of, I have to give my final verdict on this monster as being a bit boring and a bit annoying.

Skeleton, Warrior

I'll fold this entry in with the Giant Skeleton because, let's face it, we're all Skeletoned out and could do with moving on.

Skeleton Warriors roam the multiverse seeking out magical golden circlets which contain their trapped souls. Except - here's the catch! - anybody who has the circlet can control the Skeleton Warrior if it comes with 240'. Cue hilarious and farcical cat-and-mouse games and good times had by all.

And if you can't base an adventure or an entire campaign around that hokey concept, there's something wrong with you.

JRM

05-30-2009 12:35 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10422430)
[*Sorry for the delay...*]

Skeleton, Giant

Does anybody else find the picture for this one oddly....suggestive? Like the skeleton is saying, "Here, this is where my COCK would be if I still had one!!"?

Goodness gracious, great balls of fire!:eek::cool:;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10422430)
A Giant Skeleton is not the skeleton of a giant, oh no - it is an ordinary skeleton which has been enlarged. So neh. It always has a fire burning in its ribcage, which is ~~for cheesy effect~~ a byproduct of the magic used to create it. It is, though, really just a big skeleton in the end, and there's not all that much to distinguish it from an ordinary-sized one other than more hit points and more damage.

That was my first impression, until I came to that bit about them throwing an 8-dice *fireball* once per hour. One of those could easily wipe out a party of 4th-5th level adventurers if they fluff their saving throws. *Fireball* is not a trivial spell in AD&D.

I also can't help wondering what would happen if you combine a Giant Skeleton and a Monster Skeleton - AC 3(2), HD 6+6 methinks.

I'll agree with you about all the Ravenloft references being extraneous.

JRM

05-30-2009 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10422430)

Skeleton, Warrior

I'll fold this entry in with the Giant Skeleton because, let's face it, we're all Skeletoned out and could do with moving on.

Skeleton Warriors roam the multiverse seeking out magical golden circlets which contain their trapped souls. Except here's the catch! - anybody who has the circlet can control the Skeleton Warrior if it comes with 240'. Cue hilarious and farcical cat-and-mouse games and good times had by all.

And if you can't base an adventure or an entire campaign around that hokey concept, there's something wrong with you.

Alas, I never have done a scenario were someone had their skeleton warrior command-circlet lost or stolen, and was frantically searching for it while an undead killer remorselessly tracks them down.

Skeleton Warriors seem a natural choice to command your necromancer's skeletal legions, but have one obvious flaw - they are slow. Regular, monster and giant skeletons all have a 12" movement, while warriors only have 6". I can't help imagine them running along behind a horde of bony fighters, cursing at them to slow down.

Of course its speed doubles when its hunting a former controller. So, all the controller has to do is stand were he wants the skeleton warrior to go, remove the circlet to the warrior will charge towards them, then replace it before it arrives with murderous intent.

I imagine this is because they wear heavy armour, but if so the hindrance can easily be circumvented by assuming it's enchanted for mobility. Does that mean a lightly armoured SW has a 12" speed, which becomes 24" when it's heading to kill a former controller? Maybe 12" is its natural speed (if anything about such a creature can be described as natural), and the warrior is usually slowed to 6" by the restraining influence of its circlet?

A more impressive solution to the warrior mobility problem would be giving it a mount, like a zombie wyvern, nightmare or skeleton warhorse.

Kreuzritter

05-30-2009 01:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

and because it's come up, I'm pretty sure somebody once commented that Skeleton Warriors made for better death kights than the "Liches with platemail and bastard swords" we've had up until 4e

Wakboth

05-30-2009 02:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kreuzritter (Post 10422762)

and because it's come up, I'm pretty sure somebody once commented that Skeleton Warriors made for better death kights than the "Liches with platemail and bastard swords" we've had up until 4e

They're both from Fiend Folio, if memory serves...

celebrityomnipath

05-30-2009 02:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10415722)

Of course you do. You just don't realize it. I mean, if the gnolls (like their hyena brethren) can't tell their males and females apart, why should a human be any better at it?

I have seen evidence that would indicate otherwise.

celebrityomnipath

05-30-2009 02:43 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10422743)

A more impressive solution to the warrior mobility problem would be giving it a mount, like a zombie wyvern, nightmare or skeleton warhorse.

Ah, just put them on wheels.

JRM

05-30-2009 03:13 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10423173)
Ah, just put them on wheels.

I heard the tinker gnomes tried that, but found the Skeleton Warrior had difficulty riding a bicycle while wielding a two-handed sword.

celebrityomnipath

05-30-2009 03:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10423327)
I heard the tinker gnomes tried that, but found the Skeleton Warrior had difficulty riding a bicycle while wielding a two-handed sword.

I meant rollerskates. But also giving them a barbarian level would work.

Sleeper

05-30-2009 03:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10423327)
I heard the tinker gnomes tried that, but found the Skeleton Warrior had difficulty riding a bicycle while wielding a two-handed sword.

Fortunately, the invention of the skegway warrior solved that problem. They could even rent them out to tourists in the off season.

celebrityomnipath

05-30-2009 03:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

And thinking of undead, where is it, ah yeah:

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10318113)

Yes that whole bit about requiring wish level plus magic to cure a Shadow is extremely (maybe excessively) harsh, but at least the MM's consistent in that other incorporeal undead like Wraiths and Spectres are also very hard to bring back to life, requiring a "special quest", whatever that means.

There was a thing in that Undead! book about that. Apparently if some powerful undead wants to become human then it needs three things: It needs its mind (either floating about noncorporeally or inside a dessicated corpse as with a Litch), their physical body (for a Litch said dessicated corpse, for a Specter, well you'd better remember where you parked it) and of course a soul.

Now, as they don't now have a soul, apparently, they need to make one. Supposedly their soul has been eaten (nom nom nom) by teh nagative energy that now animates them, or summint. Anyway they need to take an astral quest to a god plane or a plane of positive energy (or moar liekly their mates need to do it for them; I can't see a Specter getting on with a plane of positive energy), to, and I believe this is an actual quote "Forge a new soul"! Yeah it is pretty awesome if you put it liek that.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10383000)

Villages and towns are always founded around a cemetary. Until the area is marked, fenced off, and warded, no humanoids can or will dwell there. More remote farmsteads load the still-warm bodies of those who succumb to fever in the night onto a wagon, and brave the invisible potholes as they race towards the nearest consecrated plot. Death isn't quiet. It's grasping and awful.

There's a name for that. It's called Unhallowed Metropolis.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10385267)

But societies built on undead as a workforce seem like they would have a really, really big advantage over societies without a zombie workforce. Thousands more slaves, who work tirelessly and without need for food or pay, following commands with less chance of rebellion.

According to GURPS: Technomancer, it will boost teh productivity of an industrialised society by 10%. Now that's a society that already has production line robots and poorly paid illegal immigrants.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10389045)

Really though, it's just so I could make jokes about playing a "wight supremacist".

Yeah that is fucking awesome. Also The Wight Brothers, It'll be Alright on the Night, Wight beside you, my country; Wight or wrong, fight for your Wight to party. And of course teh legendarily deadly prestige class; Wight Knight.

JRM

05-30-2009 03:57 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10415722)

Of course you do. You just don't realize it. I mean, if the gnolls (like their hyena brethren) can't tell their males and females apart, why should a human be any better at it?

Actually, it's more complicated than that. Gnolls can identify each others' sex pretty reliably through physiological cues (mostly scent, but there are also difference in body shape & features to those who know what to look for).

However, the gnoll language applies gender to most of its nouns seemingly at random (like German!), i.e. a fire-drill or a bow is female, but an archer or midwife is male (regardless of the actual sex of the bowperson), which causes a certain amount of confusion to outsiders since gnolls often carry this habit of speech over into other languages.

Furthermore, gnolls are instinctively matriarchal, so a high-ranking male is expected to conduct himself like a female when in the presence of other "females" to be worthy of respect. Thus, except for certain all-male societies, important male gnolls will affect female behaviour and use female clothes and equipment.

This also explains why so many gnolls who plan diplomatic missions to human lands go to such effort to obtain noblewoman's dresses in very large sizes.

JRM

05-30-2009 04:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10423408)

Fortunately, the invention of the skegway warrior solved that problem. They could even rent them out to tourists in the off season.

I think you're getting confused with the **Segway** Warriors.

A **Skeg** is a stabilizing fin on a boat or surfboard. It's true that the surfing skeletons of the Skegway Warriors are able to wield their greatswords while balancing on their boards, but they're of limited effectiveness on land -

although they are much feared on the open ocean, as any Sea Caballero will tell you!

Sleeper

05-30-2009 04:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10423565)
*I think you're getting confused with the **Segway** Warriors.*

No, no, no... you're confusing the eerie constructs with a(n un)species under the protection of the portmanteau police. To make a minor segue, just because two words are spelled (or pronounced...) the same does not mean they *are* the same. :p

Sleeper

05-30-2009 04:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10423513)
*There's a name for that. It's called **Unhallowed Metropolis**.*

I know nothing about it. I was actually more or less inspired by the Fell, from *Midnight*.

Mikelibrarian

05-30-2009 02:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10423074)
*They're both from **Fiend Folio**, if memory serves...*

Yes and the Death Knight was created by Charles Stross, the guy who created the Slaadi, Githyanki and Githzerai.

My favorite episode of the Dungeons and Dragons cartoon featured a Skeleton Warrior and the quest for his circlet.

Mikelibrarian

05-30-2009 02:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10412965)

I'd be more impressed if he could lift his arm off the ground without falling over, or do something about that "only fly in a circle" handicap he suffers from.

Though it makes me wonder whether Dimidation explains the Fachan. Maybe that legendary half-man monster started out as one half of a Heraldic Monster? It makes me wonder whether there are any other Half-Monsters out there, off hand I can only think of Half-Eagles.

Hmm, maybe the One Armed Sword-Eagle isn't that useless a monster concept.:D

Could I bear not to give him the power of Burnination? I don't see as how I can choose not to, those peasants in their thatch-roofed cottages don't burninate themselves, you know. I'll probably have it use its single wing to fly in circles and fling razor-sharp feathers. Such a lopsided creature shouldn't be able to fly in a straight line. Wouldn't want it to be unrealistic, after all.;

Fachans are a monster from Scottish folklore.

They also appeared in the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. As did a Shedu by the way, although it did not seem to have any magic power.

Another half monster that appears in the Al-Qadim supplement is the Nasnas

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fachan>

http://yafgc.shipsinker.com/index.php?strip_id=399

JRM

05-30-2009 06:56 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10425492)

Fachans are a monster from Scottish folklore.

SNIP

Too late I'm afraid, I already knew where Fachans come from in Earth mythology (and read YAFC too, when I can find the time).

I t'was just riffing on alternative explanations for AD&D Fachans in a platonic-heraldic-beasts-made-real-setting.

JRM

05-30-2009 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10425485)

My favorite episode of the Dungeons and Dragons cartoon featured a Skeleton Warrior and the quest for his circlet.

I vaguely remember that one, but it's been ages since that show aired over here.

Glancing through the Skeleton Warrior entry again, I can't help wondering how the Warrior in the illustration kept his full head of hair. He (?) must have access to some amazing hair-restorer, the party must be hired by a balding monarch to discoverer the secret!;)

Strangething

05-31-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Isn't there the giant skeleton from Japanese myth? *Checks Wikipedia* Here we go, the Gashadokuro:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gashadokuro>

Nothing about throwing fireballs, though.

Sleeper

05-31-2009 03:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I love this quote from Wikipedia: "The only way a gashadokuro can be detected before it appears is by hearing a ringing in one's ears." *D&D* needs more random mythological weirdness.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mikelibrarian (Post 10425485)

My favorite episode of the Dungeons and Dragons cartoon featured a Skeleton Warrior and the quest for his circlet.

I think that episode is why I prefer skeleton warriors to death knights. I found the story more appealing than Lord Soth's. Though IIRC (and it's been *ages*), the episode didn't exactly follow the rules very well. Didn't he turn to flesh at some point? Not a complaint; the Rule of Cool covers a lot of sins.

The Last Conformist

05-31-2009 06:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10422430)

Skeleton, Giant

Does anybody else find the picture for this one oddly....suggestive? Like the skeleton is saying, "Here, this is where my COCK would be if I still had one!!"?

This reminds me of a mystery from my misspent youth - sometime in the early/mid nineties, (some Swedish subsidiary of) Disney printed a Halloween poster showing a bunch of Disney characters dressed up in Halloween costume and surrounded by a bunch of dancing skeletons, one of which prominently displayed what looked very much like a [baculum](#).

Presumably the artist meant to depict something else but I can't guess what.

JRM

05-31-2009 02:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10427513)

Presumably the artist meant to depict something else but I can't guess what.

Why presume? A lot of Disney characters are anthropomorphised carnivores (bears, dogs, cats et cetera), and unlike humans most Carnivora do have baculums, so it may just have been a skeleton versions of one. (Or an anthropomorphic version of another mammal like a mouse.) :cool:

The Last Conformist

05-31-2009 10:00 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10428695)

Why presume? A lot of Disney characters are anthropomorphised carnivores (bears, dogs, cats et cetera), and unlike humans most Carnivora do have baculums, so it may just have been a skeleton versions of one. (Or an anthropomorphic version of another mammal like a mouse.) :cool:

I feel pretty confident that if it were intended to be an anthropomorphic dog or whatever, the artist would have chosen a less obscure sign to indicate this than a baculum (what percentage of primary school kids - the target audience for the poster - have even heard of bacula?), most likely a recognizably non-human skull.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10429423)

I feel pretty confident that if it were intended to be an anthropomorphic dog or whatever, the artist would have chosen a less obscure sign to indicate this than a baculum (what percentage of primary school kids - the target audience for the poster - have even heard of bacula?), most likely a recognizably non-human skull.

Um, er, um, give me a second to think of a counter-argument.

How about:

(a) The artist could deliberately be being obscure. If they're trying to disguise a baculum, maybe they thought it would give it away if the skull was obviously animalistic.

(b) The animal-ness of cartoon theriohumanoid's head can be very variable, as can the (humanish-ness of animated skeletons that are supposed to be humans), so it may just be one of the more human-looking furries.

(c) Maybe the skeletons are assembled from bits-and-pieces of different individuals, so the skull and hips don't match?

(d) Come to think of it, in the Disney TV cartoons I remember from my youth like Tailspin, where most of the sapient races were anthropomorphic animals the skeletons (animate or otherwise) were still mostly humanoid. Maybe all these beings had humanoid skeletons inside, or they were the remnants of the long dead human empire?

Take two excuses, they're free!:o

EDIT: I wonder what the next silly side-track we're going to be posting about while waiting for the next monster. Come on Noisms, where are the Slaad!:p

chronostrike

06-01-2009 04:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Tangent: Shere Khan is my archetypal image of a rakshasa.

Strangething

06-02-2009 01:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10430543)

Tangent: Shere Khan is my archetypal image of a rakshasa.

You are not alone in this.

JRM

06-02-2009 01:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10430543)
Tangent: Shere Khan is my archetypal image of a rakshasa.

I'm guessing you're talking about the anthropomorphic version from Talespin rather than the Disney Jungle Book version that looks (surprise surprise!) just like a tiger.

Although the JB version may not look like a Rakshasa, it sure has a personality & mannerisms that would make for an excellent Rakshasa, indeed he strikes me as more Rakshasa-like than the corporate overlord version on Tailspin, who's more like a furry and kid-friendly version of Lex Luthor.

chronostrike

06-02-2009 06:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10434212)
I'm guessing you're talking about the anthropomorphic version from Talespin rather than the Disney Jungle Book version that looks (surprise surprise!) just like a tiger.

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Shere Khan (JB) is a pretty good villain what with the refined and menacing demeanor, but he doesn't have lackeys. Shere Khan (TS) is the better fit to me because he *owns* Cape Suzette. He has both the personality and the political power.

JRM

06-02-2009 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by chronostrike (Post 10435417)

Shere Khan (JB) is a pretty good villain what with the refined and menacing demeanor, but he doesn't have lackeys. Shere Khan (TS) is the better fit to me because he owns Cape Suzette. He has both the personality and the political power.

True enough, but the TS Khan just doesn't seem *evil* enough to me to make a mean Rakshasa. I don't remember any episodes of Tailspin where he obsesses over eating an orphaned human child, for example.

EDIT: Although I could see it working if you modify Khan from how he's represented in the TVs, making everything you see of him on the small screen just a front, even the supposed 'behind the scenes ruthless business-tiger'. After the latest japes with Baloo are over and he's back in his sanctum, Khan paws twist backwards as he reverts to his true form and turns to his closest flunkies, declaring "I hunger, bring me some baby foie gras".

celebrityomnipath

06-02-2009 07:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10437639)

After the latest japes with Baloo are over and he's back in his sanctum, Khan paws twist backwards as he reverts to his true form and turns to his closest flunkies, declaring "I hunger, bring me some baby foie gras".

That is totally how it should be. Though technically what he would say is "nom nom nom"...

Lugh

06-02-2009 08:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10437708)

That is totally how it should be. Though technically what he would say is "nom nom nom"...

OK, seriously, the **LAST** thing I want to encourage in my games is lolcat-speaking rakshasa. We already got that with a rakasta picture captioned "I can haz yur soul?"

I still can't decide whether lolcats are better or worse than Monty Python quotes for killing the mood of a session.

JRM

06-02-2009 10:38 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10437708)

That is totally how it should be. Though technically what he would say is "nom nom nom"...

Definitely not, Mr Khan was educated at the finest Rakshasa private schools in England, I believe he is an alumni of both Clawbridge or Oxfang, he would never stoop to such vulgar speech patterns.

Besides, it's well known that lol-rakshasas would much rather eat baby cheeseburger.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10437901)

*OK, seriously, the **LAST** thing I want to encourage in my games is lolcat-speaking rakshasa. We already got that with a rakasta picture captioned "I can haz yur soul?"*

I still can't decided whether lolcats are better or worse than Monty Python quotes for killing the mood of a session.

I'll have to agree with you there, Lugh.

celebrityomnipath

06-03-2009 12:42 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10438319)

Definitely not, Mr Khan was educated at the finest Rakshasa private schools in England, I believe he is an alumni of both Clawbridge or Oxfang, he would never stoop to such vulgar speech patterns.

I think what you are trying to say is that he had an education rather than a educashun.

noisms

06-05-2009 01:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Slaad

Like the Tanar'ri, Baatezu and Yuguloths, the Slaadi appear as vague cyphers in the Monstrous Manual - you pretty much have to wait for the Planescape Monstrous Compendia to get all the juicy stuff when it comes to 2e planar entities.

As is stands, Slaadi are portrayed as vicious frogmen who breed through implantation and chest-eruption a la aliens, but that's about all. Only Red Slaadi and Blue Slaadi get stats, and we have another sampling of the highly eccentric XP system the MM employs - Blue Slaadi are worth a whopping 16,500 XP, which for an 8+4 HD monster is almost as bad as the Abishai.

Slaadi are Chaotic Neutral in alignment, but really seem Chaotic Evil - it's difficult to tell where those two alignments separate at the best of times, and the fact that Slaadi tend to attack and try to eat strangers on sight and speak lots of "evil languages" doesn't help. The idea of a race which embodies Chaos is an interesting one, so it's a bit disappointing that the Slaadi seem like Tanar'ri but just not quite as bad.

Slaadi could be an interesting big bad in a campaign, I think - an implacable foe with a complete lack of morality or rationale, who can only be fought with extreme violence. It would definitely work as a combat-orientated game.

Wakboth

06-05-2009 01:26 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Slaadi are pretty neat, but I agree that they tended to come off more as "CE lite". Then again, that was a common failing of CN alignments...

I think they would have been better if they *weren't* so implacably aggressive. Sure, if you actually attack one, it goes all berserker frog upon your nonbatrachian butt, but if you hold your swords, there's a good chance you can strike up a conversation with the slaad. Or it will ignore you. Or give you interesting things (for sufficiently chaotic values of "interesting"). Or, indeed, attack without any provocation; they're unpredictable, after all!

As for conversing with slaadi... I think the low-end, low-int ones should be frogmalks - non sequiturs, random "jokes", a roomfull of slaadi chanting "DESU DESU DESU DESU" at you - but the smarter ones take more effort to figure out. In any case, even when they're being violent, I feel they should not be *malicious* or gloating or anything like that.

And, to finish off this ramby and incoherent comment, I'm suddenly inspired by R.A. Lafferty's story *Frog on a Mountain*. Like all Lafferty stories it's quite weird, and has its own lyrical grotesqueness that seems like a good fit for the slaadi... How about if the slaadi, even the top-end ones, are imperfect or broken forms of something else?

From red slaadi come blue slaadi, from blues reds; and from both come greens, then greys and blacks... but the process has thrown a cog, and they're stuck as these uncouth, absurd, babbling and croaking frog-monsters. It would be a great, epic goal for a high-level party to help "fix" the slaadi... as long as they don't get their souls eaten and digested to help the broken death slaadi to turn into what they ought to be! :D

Ginkomortus

06-05-2009 01:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10449088)

Slaadi are pretty neat, but I agree that they tended to come off more as "CE lite". Then again, that was a common failing of CN alignments...

I just always found it weird that the slaadi are so hierarchical and rigid in their structure.

It seems weird, even if you figure in a Courts of Chaos/Amber viewpoint, by which logic Formians and Modrons should be constantly backstabbing each other over every little thing.

demiurge1138

06-05-2009 01:53 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The slaadi seem pretty imperfect to me. After all, red ones beget blue, blue begets red, and both of them hate each other.

Slaad farming is an old standard originated in the depths of EN World history, but the idea bears repeating here. Use planar binding spells to get yourself a red slaad. Own a farm. Have the red slaad implant all of your cows, then wait for the blue slaadi to burst. Generally, at that point, you'd want lots of high level enchantment magic to control your new slaad army, but if all you're after is havoc, make sure to put your cows far away from you, kick back, and watch.

It gets really silly with the suggestion of using awaken to make your cows sentient, then train them in wizardry to get green slaad from the implanted eggs.

Slaadi are a favorite of mine from way back--in high school, I wrote "the rather small complete book of slaad" which had discussions on slaad physiology and psychology, descriptions of the Lords of Chaos, a few prestige classes (both for characters who want to be more like slaad and for slaad themselves, like the chaossummoner and the monk-hunter) and a whole ton of other slaadi. Like life slaadi, the opposite of death slaadi, who are tainted with goodness and possess healing powers, the Pandaemonic exiled yellow slaadi, who represent the randomness of disease, the coral slaadi, which glide through Limbo like flying squirrels and grow symbiotic coral on their chests and the silver slaadi, which is a swarm of tiny slaadi that can combine to form a single slaad body.

My explanation for why slaadi were CE lite, at least back when I wrote it, was that slaadi are born of conflict, being generated through parasitoid behavior to one of the most violent of the Outer Planes. Slaadi are antisocial, and most of the time when two slaadi meet, it will result in them fighting, oftentimes for hours, as they retreat briefly and heal up rapidly until one of them just makes a run for it. They expect that everything can heal as well as they can, and are disappointed when the little soft things with hair on their heads can't, and get ripped in half. I did also give the half-hearted sage theory that slaadi used to be demons, and have "ascended" into neutrality, only it doesn't always stick.

Actually, that explanation works for me somehow. Perhaps the slaadi are the remnants of the obyrith, the primal progenitor demons who fought for the Queen of Chaos against the Wind Dukes of Aaqa. As punishment for their crimes, these obyrith were stripped of their ever-changing forms and locked into a single, humiliating one--the giant frog--and cast away into Limbo, in the hopes that the lack of evil in the place would shift their alignment through planar inertia. It worked, to an extent, but the slaadi still represent the violence and destruction of chaos more often than not.

Mr. Teapot

06-05-2009 02:39 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10449171)

I just always found it weird that the slaadi are so hierarchical and rigid in their structure.

I think the slaad really are a lot less rigid in their structure than the MM (or Planescape Monstrous Compendium) suggests. More likely, one of those infamous unnamed "sages" got to watch a limited portion of slaad reproduction, and generalized it into an ironclad rule. When in reality, slaad physiology is strange and random: any slaad might produce any other slaad, or no slaad at all, or some other species. Sometimes slaads bear new kinds of slaads, or slaads with skin color of one kind of slaad but the characteristics of a different kind.

You know, randomness.

Wakboth

06-05-2009 02:54 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10449411)

I think the slaad really are a lot less rigid in their structure than the MM (or Planescape Monstrous Compendium) suggests. More likely, one of those infamous unnamed "sages" got to watch a limited portion of slaad reproduction, and generalized it into an ironclad rule. When in reality, slaad physiology is strange and random: any slaad might produce any other slaad, or no slaad at all, or some other species. Sometimes slaads bear new kinds of slaads, or slaads with skin color of one kind of slaad but the characteristics of a different kind.

You know, randomness.

The Random Slaadi Characteristic Chart in 3e MM was a brilliant little touch. You could end up with odd-colored slaadi, or ones with huge mouths, tiny eyes (with eyebeams!), extra magical abilities and so on and on.

Why this never made an appearance in the more chart-heavy earlier editions, I really can't say.

Mr. Teapot

06-05-2009 04:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10449487)

Why this never made an appearance in the more chart-heavy earlier editions, I really can't say.

There was a random chart for generating demons in the 1st edition DMG, I believe. But not for Slaads, exactly.

Ragnarok_Engine

06-05-2009 01:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10449088)

As for conversing with slaadi... I think the low-end, low-int ones should be frogmalks - non sequiturs, random "jokes" a roomfull of slaadi chanting "DESU DESU DESU DESU" at you -

And so now I understand /b/, and am enlightened.

DMH

06-05-2009 07:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10449487)

The Random Slaadi Characteristic Chart in 3e MM was a brilliant little touch. You could end up with odd-colored slaadi, or ones with huge mouths, tiny eyes (with eyebeams!), extra magical abilities and so on and on.

Why this never made an appearance in the more chart-heavy earlier editions, I really can't say.

IIRC, the Hordlings in the 1e MM II had a random chart generator. Yeah, demons are random and chaos frogs aren't.

Lions Den Press has Iconic Bestiary which as a much better, non-frog, non-evil chaos critter meant to be an open content slaad. Lots of charts, though it is skewed towards vertebrates. I would have included inverts, plants, fungi and odds and ends to really provide a chaotic critter.

sim_james

06-05-2009 07:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10449088)

I think they would have been better if they weren't so implacably aggressive. Sure, if you actually attack one, it goes all berserker frog upon your nonbatrachian butt, but if you hold your swords, there's a good chance you can strike up a conversation with the slaad. Or it will ignore you. Or give you interesting things (for sufficiently chaotic values of "interesting"). Or, indeed, attack without any provocation; they're unpredictable, after all!

XANXOST AGREES! XANXOST SOMETIMES LIKES TO TALK TO OTHER BEINGS, BUT IS OFTEN SAD WHEN THEY ARE TOO BUSY BEING DIGESTED TO REPLY. BUT THEN SOMETIMES XANXOST BURPS AND IS HAPPY, BECAUSE OTHER THINGS ARE TALKING TO XANXOST NOW!

JRM

06-05-2009 11:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I agree with a lot of the previous posts on Slaadi.

The Monstrous Manual entry leaves a lot to be desired. I prefer a Slaad to be a lot less Evil and a lot more unpredictable. Having them follow a rigid hierarchy makes no sense to me, and I'd never use it.

To me, Slaadi should be ferociously individualistic, some may follow the lead of another Slaad but they don't do so out of any traditional command structure or hierarchy, but just because they admire their leader's style and ideas and want to emulate them.

They should also often act and think in ways that make no sense to most other creatures, like Dragonewts in RuneQuest. Slaadi should give the impression of being beyond the comprehension of most Mortal or Lawful beings, not necessarily insane but just bizarrely (plus, in the case of Slaadi, idiosyncratically) different in their priorities.

Oh, and throwing in one-paragraph entries on the Green/Grey/Death Slaads is really selling them short. I'd have preferred them to have cut them out and expanded the entries of the lesser Slaad, the higher ranking ones really deserve full-page entries of their own.

The Monstrous Manual did short-change quite a few of the more interesting monsters in a bit to squeeze in as many creatures as possible.

Zartes

06-06-2009 01:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10452755)
[snip] Yeah, demons are random and chaos frogs aren't. [snip]

I saw a theory somewhere that explained why all Slaad are giant frogs: Limbo is the plane of chaos. So why are its natives all giant frogs that follow a high structure?

because it *doesn't make sense*.

That's the point. They're all giant frogs because it totally stuffs up the chaoticness of Limbo. And that's what Chaos is all about: being chaotic, even if that means not being chaotic, just to shake things up.

(similarly, from planescape, there is a group called the Xaositects. They usually act even more random than the Slaad do. But they once spent a week being entirely normal, purely so they wouldn't be too predictable in their randomness)

demiurge1138

06-06-2009 02:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by sim_james (Post 10452790)
XANXOST AGREES! XANXOST SOMETIMES LIKES TO TALK TO OTHER BEINGS, BUT IS OFTEN SAD WHEN THEY ARE TOO BUSY BEING DIGESTED TO REPLY. BUT THEN SOMETIMES XANXOST BURPS AND IS HAPPY, BECAUSE OTHER THINGS ARE TALKING TO XANXOST NOW!

Oh, Xanxost. When I ran a Planescape game, he was often the giver of quests to my PCs, OH HO! He was friendly, and funny, and had a tendency to ask various smaller party members to sit in his mouth while he talked.

Wisely, nobody took him up on it.

As for the slaadi = giant frog thing, two explanations I've heard and liked are:

1) In Limbo, the answer to everything is giant frog, if you happen to be crazy (so slaadi reproduction is just their way of making everything fit into their giant frog worldview).

2) Slaadi are trend-whores, and giant frogs (thanks to the influence of slaad lords like Ygorl) are In. This author, a guy on ENWorld whose thread is [here](#), also gave us statistics for other, less currently trendy slaadi shapes, like pachyderms, plants and monkeys.

Lugh

06-06-2009 03:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10454048)

2) Slaadi are trend-whores, and giant frogs (thanks to the influence of slaad lords like Ygorl) are In. This author, a guy on ENWorld whose thread is here, also gave us statistics for other, less currently trendy slaadi shapes, like pachyderms, plants and monkeys.

Oh, I like that. I might even have to use intelligent tables. Or shades of the color blue.

Naturally, I also had all slaadi using wild magic from Tome of Magic.

I've never used slaadi much myself. I just never got them. Maybe I'm not chaotic enough, I don't know. I get demons, devils, and even modrons. Slaadi just didn't fit the overall pattern. Which, I guess, is part of their nature.

JohnBiles

06-06-2009 08:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

"The noble race of the Slaad is often misunderstood by the races of the Prime Planes. And even by our neighbors. Let me begin with our origins.

We are now native to the plane you call Limbo, but which we now simply call Guaschelaz'ra. This week, anyway. We periodically rename it when the time is right. But originally, we came from a Prime Plane now long gone. This world was largely swampy and wet and a variety of reptiles ruled over it, along with fish, amphibians like our ancestors, and other things which liked it hot and wet.

rimshot

Thank you, I'll be here until I get bored.

Now, our ancestors gradually clawed their way up from being mere frogs to being a race of bipedal frog-like beings who went through the usual rounds of civilization and barbarism. However, the more barbaric members of our species, which you now call 'Bullywugs', eventually turned to demons and devils for aid against the civilized folk, who were forced to turn to desperate measures. The result destroyed our home plane. The more barbaric of our race who yet had not turned to evil became the Grippli. Some Bullywugs were saved by their demonic masters and other planes infected with them. Our civilized ancestors fled to the Outer Planes where the majority of them perished, but those of us who fled to Limbo survived at the cost of becoming both more and less than we were.

We cannot breed normally. Rather, we must transform other sentients into members of our kind. This is done voluntarily when possible; in such cases, the implanted bit of slaadness gradually, peacefully transforms the person into a fully functional slaad. Unfortunately, we have found most people fail to understand this is a transformation to a higher state, an improvement on their current meatbag body.

Involuntary transformation of others is the other option, taken only when dealing with hostile foes or when the slaad race has been badly depleted by war. The victim is torn apart by the newly birthed slaad; worse, it has little more maturity than a baby but the body of an adult. The result is the murderous lesser breeds of Slaad most adventurers clash with. Eventually, they attain maturity if they live that long, but a lot of them die. Worse, they can produce spawn. Thus, they are often a tremendous source of trouble but do make good shock troops in war.

Our race serves the Slaad Lords in order to survive; they counterbalance the gods and demon lords who would otherwise encroach on our territory, though we are often drawn into various insane struggles as a result. But there is nowhere else we can turn without abandoning this home and risking the extinction which came to our bretheren who fled to other planes.

Many of us go mad, but the rest of us are not insane; we are free, and prefer to spend our time carving private worlds out of the chaos, making art, studying things and continuing what we can of our ancestor's ways, though all of us must drop everything when our lords call.

Unfortunately, most of you Primes only meet those among us who have gone crazy or our insane war-spawn children. The rest of us have little incentive to visit the prime and are usually not out wandering the streets of Limbo, looking for trouble."

Zartes

06-06-2009 12:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JohnBiles (Post 10455417)
[snip]

rimshot

Thank you, I'll be here until I get bored.

[snip]

this instantly starts me thinking of all slaad being like Robin Williams...

DMH

06-06-2009 06:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10452755)
IIRC, the Hordlings in the 1e MM II had a random chart generator. Yeah, demons are random and chaos frogs aren't.

Yes, I am quoting myself- because I was wrong. Hordlings are not demons. They are native to The Grey Wastes (the NE plane) along with diaaks (those bird things). So NE outsiders are more chaotic than frogs?

JRM

06-06-2009 08:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10454048)

As for the slaadi = giant frog thing, two explanations I've heard and liked are:

1) In Limbo, the answer to everything is giant frog, if you happen to be crazy (so slaadi reproduction is just their way of making everything fit into their giant frog worldview).

2) Slaadi are trend-whores, and giant frogs (thanks to the influence of slaad lords like Ygorl) are In. This author, a guy on ENWorld whose thread is here, also gave us statistics for other, less currently trendy slaadi shapes, like pachyderms, plants and monkeys.

I like the modest way you omitted your own **Slaad-a-Palooza** thread on Enworld, demiurge. I remember there being a lot of cool 3E Slaadi on that.

Barghest

06-07-2009 01:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

>>>They expect that everything can heal as well as they can, and are disappointed when the little soft things with hair on their heads can't, and get ripped in half.<<<

Well, Heck! (or in this case, Limbo!) Maybe aggressive ass-whooping is an important part of Slaadi communication. Much like body language and facial expression, a lot of the meaning behind Slaadi language loses its nuance and depth without eye-gouging and light evisceration for emphasis.

It would stand to reason for a species (?) of fast-healing chaos frog monsters. They would adapt using what they had to work with, perhaps.

So, when you see a Slaadi, and you try to parley with it, and it rips your face off, it's not really attacking--it IS parleying, in the traditional, formal Slaadi manner. In fact, it would be disrespectful NOT to speak with the proper violent "emphasis" added. After all, as a communication method, it works fine with no problems where other Slaadi are involved. Who would have guessed the little newcomers were too fragile to even *speak* properly!

Not mauling your new friends is bad manners in Frogtown.

In fact, since breeding involves injecting a host with an egg capsule after softening it up in combat--maybe that Slaadi who seems to be trying to kill you is really *flirting* with you, stud.

demiurge1138

06-07-2009 02:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10456760)

*I like the modest way you omitted your own **Slaad-a-Palooza** thread on Enworld, demiurge. I remember there being a lot of cool 3E Slaadi on that.*

Well, I mentioned the Rather Small Book in a previous post, which was a compilation of my work on that thread plus extra stuff.

Pukako

06-07-2009 03:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Barghest (Post 10457365)

So, when you see a Slaadi, and you try to parley with it, and it rips your face off, it's not really attacking--it IS parleying, in the traditional, formal Slaadi manner. In fact, it would be disrespectful NOT to speak with the proper violent "emphasis" added. After all, as a communication method, it works fine with no problems where other Slaadi are involved. Who would have guessed the little newcomers were too fragile to even speak properly!

Not mauling your new friends is bad manners in Frogtown.

So given that fireballing or mauling Slaadi on sight is just saying 'Howdy', what do you have to do to annoy or upset them? Give them flowers?

Somewhere out there, a Sage with a Ring of Regeneration or something like that should have written a dictionary to Sladdi language. I hereby name him Borzak the Badly Maulled.

JRM

06-07-2009 05:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Pukako (Post 10459392)

So given that fireballing or mauling Slaadi on sight is just saying 'Howdy', what do you have to do to annoy or upset them? Give them flowers?

Easy. Slaadi loathe Law/Order, so you just compliment them on their consistency and offer them a job as a filing clerk.:o

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10459359)

Well, I mentioned the Rather Small Book in a previous post, which was a compilation of my work on that thread plus extra stuff.

Yes, but at least you didn't shill it. Anyhow, I've been re-reading the Slaad-a-Palooza thread and its inspired me to think of creating new Slaad.

My first idea is the Frog Slaad, a scrawny emerald-green creature with a serrated ruff around its neck, wrist-blades and many bizarre, paradoxical powers such as:

Quote:

Ineffable Frogness: A Frog Slaad is immune to all Divination spells, it does not register to detection spells, including *detect chaos*, nor does it appear to *scry* spells. Divinations which draw upon the wisdom of divine-level powers, such as *contact outer plane*, will give the answer "Frog" to any and all queries regarding a Frog Slaad.

Transfrogrify Weapon: Any artificial weapon that strikes a Frog Slaad will be turned to frogs before it can do any damage as if by a *polymorph any object* spell, unless the wielder or weapon succeeds in saving versus spells. This effect does not work on living creatures or natural weapons such as claws or fangs.

Size of the Polydimensional Frog: A Frog Slaad can vary its size from Fine to Gargantuan at will, ranging from the scale of the tiniest tree frog to the greatest Froghemoth. It can even assume two different size categories at the same time, being simultaneously enormous beyond belief and negligibly small and gaining the benefits of both scales. These size benefits are included in the statistics above.

A Frog Slaad does not gain the benefits of Size of the Polydimensional Frog when it is dazed by an *order's wrath* or deafened by *dictum*, these spells limit it to its default Small size, applying the following changes:

(More Stuff)

I have some other ideas for the Frog Slaad which are almost as silly:D

Barghest

06-07-2009 08:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Hmmm. Good question.

Possibly Slaadi see direct hand-to-hand combat as the only proper language enhancer. Using a sword would be the equivalent of rolling your R's pretentiously. Using magic to attack would be the equivalent of adopting a fake British accent when you aren't British, like Madonna.

Which would lead to interesting encounters, like a Slaadi reacting to a Fireball by crying out, "Oooooooo! Aren't WE

high-falutin'! Off to play the Grahnd Piahno, eh, Youah Mahjesty?"

If you really want to piss them off, the only way is to short-circuit the physical avenues of communication completely. Use telepathy. There is no insult more mortal to Slaadi pseudo-culture. How gauche! Death Slaadi only have telepathy so that they can provoke deadly fights. They get confused when this doesn't work.

EmperorSeth

06-08-2009 01:30 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10459623)

Easy. Slaadi loathe Law/Order, so you just compliment them on their consistency and offer them a job as a filing clerk.:o

Or insist that it's a much better show than CSI! :)

JRM

06-08-2009 07:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10460485)

Or insist that it's a much better show than CSI! :)

Well that goes without slaying, those chaos frogfolk just love the TV show Crime Slaad Investigation.;)

celebrityomnipath

06-09-2009 05:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10463573)

Well that goes without slaying, those chaos frogfolk just love the TV show Crime Slaad Investigation.;)

We tried to play a cops gaem of Warhammer (WFRP not 40K) where we were CSI, as in Crime Scene Interrogation. So that we would go to crime scenes and give people their initial beating, before they hauled them down to teh station for teh serious working over. They don't have DNA in Warhammer, but what they do have is violence.

Sadly it didn't work out as we all rolled useless classes (except for the bounty hunter guy), so we were

informants for an inquisitor instead. We wanted him to give us a letter of marque de Sade, but sadly he wouldn't.

JRM

06-09-2009 07:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10463573)

Well that goes without slaying, those chaos frogfolk just love the TV show Crime Slaad Investigation.;)

Oops, I just realized I made an error there, mixing up my TV shows.

Of course, the series in question is Crime Slaad *Instigation*.

The Crime Slaad* are a little known variety of Slaad that roams the Prime Material encouraging or committing law-breaking. They do Investigate crimes, but only to reward the perpetrators!

*Another addition to my list of monsters I must get around to statting up sometime.

noisms

06-09-2009 10:41 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Slug, Giant

Not a heck of a lot to say about this creature at all, to be honest - except that I like the MM's portrayal of an unstoppably strong monster crushing down walls and doors, squeezing through incredibly narrow gaps and burrowing under things in an attempt to devour hapless adventurers. A great set-piece if it ever comes off.

Also - Giant Slugs are *up to 50' long*. In my mind I always imagine them as being not all that much bigger than a human being, but 50' is getting on for sandworm size. The Giant Slug which Tanis and pals came across in the first Dragonlance trilogy wasn't that big, surely.

My favourite Giant Slug idea is a riff on what this thread threw up on the Giant Crayfish. Picture a deep, isolated, almost impassable valley in which a great 50' slug makes its lair - along with a tribe of inbred, backwards humans who worship it as a God and feed it living sacrifices. Over time their prayers and veneration have given the mindless monstrosity a form of divinity, and it expends all of its will on attracting travellers to the valley to be eaten...

JRM

06-10-2009 12:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10469197)

Slug, Giant

Not a heck of a lot to say about this creature at all, to be honest - except that I like the MM's portrayal of an unstoppably strong monster crushing down walls and doors, squeezing through incredibly narrow gaps and burrowing under things in an attempt to devour hapless adventurers. A great set-piece if it ever comes off.

Well, I can think of a few things to say...

To begin with, I feel the AD&D giant slug is obviously [S]ripped off from[/S] inspired by Robert E Howard's story "***The Hall of the Dead***", including the spitting acid bit.

In that story Conan killed the slug by dropping various massive objects upon it from a rooftop, which ironically enough would not work on the AD&D version since they're immune to blunt trauma!

Speaking of spitting acid, in the 1st edition MM the giant slug had the same exception-based acid accuracy rule (90% minus 10% per 10 yards range), but they forgot to say how much damage the acid did. I was constantly torn between making it instantly deadly (save vs breath weapon or dissolve into goo!) or trivial (a standard flask of acid only does 2d4 damage according to the 1E DMG).

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10469197)

Also - Giant Slugs are up to 50' long. In my mind I always imagine them as being not all that much bigger than a human being, but 50' is getting on for sandworm size. The Giant Slug which Tanis and pals came across in the first Dragonlance trilogy wasn't that big, surely.

I've got around that in my homebrew by saying giant slugs become adults between the size of a halfling and a human, but they just never stop growing. If one manages to live long enough it becomes a Huge (or Gargantuan!) monster that strikes terror where'er it goes.

Oh, and in my game some folk have found a use for giant slugs ... they eat them. Turns out they are an very efficient means of converting organic garbage into edible flesh, and are the main source of protein for the poor folk in a couple of major cities.

Shame they taste like a mixture of plasticine and bile, but you can't have everything.

Proper processing and seasoning can turn them into a somewhat palatable mince, which is usually served up as slugburgers or slugloaf.

Finally, I'd have liked them to make more of a slug's adverse reaction to salt. The Monstrous Manual's entry hints at this, the relevant paragraph being:

Quote:

Normal slugs have a nasty reaction to salt when it is sprinkled on them. They dry up and die in 1d4+1 rounds. It is unlikely that this technique is adaptable to the giant variety, but some fabrication and summoning spells might be adaptable if there ever seemed to be a need for it."

But I would have liked a bit more than that - maybe the suggestion that a pound of salt thrown in a giant slug's 'face' will do it X amount of damage and may cause it to hesitate for a round, while covering your trail with a

few pounds of NaCl will prevent a giant slug tracking you. I can also imagine a scenario in which the party are manhandling a hogshead (or three) of salt around a dungeon in order to kill the giant slug that slithers around in it.

demiurge1138

06-10-2009 01:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10469533)

But I would have liked a bit more than that - maybe the suggestion that a pound of salt thrown in a giant slug's 'face' will do it X amount of damage and may cause it to hesitate for a round, while covering your trail with a few pounds of NaCl will prevent a giant slug tracking you. I can also imagine a scenario in which the party are manhandling a hogshead (or three) of salt around a dungeon in order to kill the giant slug that slithers around in it.

In the 3e conversion in Dragon Magazine, salt acted like acid. A flask did 1d6 damage, immersion would do 10d6 a round.

celebrityomnipath

06-10-2009 02:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10469533)

Proper processing and seasoning can turn them into a somewhat palatable mince, which is usually served up as slugburgers or slugloaf.

Hmmmm Slurm...

Mr. Teapot

06-10-2009 04:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10469533)

Oh, and in my game some folk have found a use for giant slugs ... they eat them. Turns out they are an very efficient means of converting organic garbage into edible flesh, and are the main source of protein for the poor folk in a couple of major cities.

Shame they taste like a mixture of plasticine and bile, but you can't have everything.

Frenchmen eat snails, right? It's not *that* different.

Actually, if you look at the various different things human beings eat in the real world, it becomes apparent that someone, somewhere has tried to eat just about anything organic you can get your hands on. So you have to wonder what cultures in D&D eat Giant Slugs, or Harpies, or Remorhazes or whatever. The thread has discussed salvaging monster body parts for armor, but what about salvaging dead Morkoth parts for the local fancy seafood restaurant?

Alternately, you could have a PC or NPC travelling the globe to kill and eat exotic creatures. Like how Charles Darwin ate every species he recorded on the voyage of the Beagle.

Lukas Sjöström

06-10-2009 04:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10470538)
Frenchmen eat snails, right? It's not that different.

Not only Frenchmen, I'll have you know. However, I suspect eating a Giant Snail would also demand finding a Giant Garlic.

Barghest

06-10-2009 05:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

>>>except that I like the MM's portrayal of an unstoppably strong monster crushing down walls and doors, squeezing through incredibly narrow gaps and burrowing under things in an attempt to devour hapless adventurers. A great set-piece if it ever comes off.

Also - Giant Slugs are up to 50' long.<<<

Oh man, and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to come up with any idea on how to use the Giant Slug.

But it seems, from the description, that they would make excellent seige engines.

Picture it--fifty-foot Giant Slugs, fitted with howdah platforms like Hannibal's elephants, steered and prodded on by goblins, laying a seige to a castle. The defenders of the castle have used up all their salt and killed half a dozen of the things, yet still the goblins and their mighty War Slugs come, bashing and spurting corrosive goop.

The only hope is that the PC's can breach the siege line and fetch a massive amount of salt. The only place they can find in the whole kingdom that might have enough is a local salt mine, where dwells a mad necromancer and his salt-encrusted zombie servants. Good digs for a necromancer doing research, keeps the bodies from rotting too fast, don't ya know.

Perhaps the PC's can return with a wagonload of smushed salt-zombies to load into the catapults. Ka-Thuuuuuung!

Kakita Kojiro

06-10-2009 12:36 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10470538)

Alternately, you could have a PC or NPC travelling the globe to kill and eat exotic creatures. Like how Charles Darwin ate every species he recorded on the voyage of the Beagle.

Heck, I've got some older chemistry books that have lists of organic chemicals describing how they look, smell, and *taste*.

People will put anything in their mouths in the interest of Science!

... which just makes me wonder if Slaad caviar might not be a delicacy, somewhere. Another opportunity for Slaad farming.

Mikelibrarian

06-10-2009 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

There was a module once, I think it had something to do with the 1st edition Manual of the Planes, that featured a babau demon mounted on a giant slug. He was one of Demogorgon's soldiers.

DMH

06-10-2009 06:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

It inspired me to create a slug kaiju for Mutant Future. The slugasaur is effectly immune to human sized weapons and salt because of the layer of slime on the skin. Anyone trying to walking on it has a chance of drowning in the stuff.

Giant slugs can be nifty alternatives to cubes for dungeon clean up. If the party kills one that is in a typical hallway, how long should it take for them to hack through the body to reach the other side?

DMH

06-10-2009 06:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

And one thing I think is missing is the giant sea slug. The coloration could be used like color spray or something similar.

Belchion

06-10-2009 06:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Barghest (Post 10470833)

But it seems, from the description, that they would make excellent siege engines.

I had a similar idea, though expected the slugs to be a bit smaller. My idea was that an evil druid conjured all normal slugs within several miles radius and combining them into a couple giant slugs. They wanted to use the slugs to wreak havoc on the backside of the town (by sending the slugs slithering over the wall) just a little before the main army tries an attack at the front door.

JRM

06-10-2009 07:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Barghest (Post 10470833)

Picture it--fifty-foot Giant Slugs, fitted with howdah platforms like Hannibal's elephants, steered and prodded on by goblins, laying a seige to a castle. The defenders of the castle have used up all their salt and killed half a dozen of the things, yet still the goblins and their mighty War Slugs come, bashing and spurting corrosive goop.

The only hope is that the PC's can breach the siege line and fetch a massive amount of salt. The only place they can find in the whole kingdom that might have enough is a local salt mine, where dwells a mad necromancer and his salt-encrusted zombie servants. Good digs for a necromancer doing research, keeps the bodies from rotting too fast, don't ya know.

Perhaps the PC's can return with a wagonload of smushed salt-zombies to load into the catapults. Ka-Thuuuuuung!

The Great Slug War would never have started if it hadn't been for the Traders' Guild trying to sabotage the goblin slugherders.

They just couldn't cope with the competition, those slugherders were undercutting them by a huge margin. Have you seen the freight charges you get from shipping goods on a cargo slug? Just one of those things is more than the equal of a normal wagon train. It can carry as much gear as a small ship, is as fast as a draught horse or mule, runs off garbage and only needs a single Slug Shaman mahout to crew it.

Plus, the Otyugh Sewage Workers Union were outraged by the goblins' proposals to replace their sewage-processing efforts with slugs, which looked a lot cheaper than the otyughs' services as the goblins could sell the resulting slugflesh.

So, the Traders used all kinds of bribery and tricks to ruin the goblin's honest business - hiring adventurers to sneak slug-eating monsters into the goblins' sluppens, bribing the city council to spread salt on the streets to "protect our children from slipping on ice" etc.

The final straw was when they released a wild giant carnivorous slug into the city's farmland and tried to pin it on the goblins.

It could only end in war.

Oh, did you know that the ogres heard "gobbos are getting rich riding giant slugs" and, being ogres, completely misinterpreted it. So, when they tried to duplicate the goblins success the results were, ah, **pretty ugly**.

JRM

06-10-2009 07:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10472594)

... which just makes me wonder if Slaad caviar might not be a delicacy, somewhere. Another opportunity for Slaad farming.

So, do you cut open the Slaad's hands to get the eggs out or wait for them to implant something (or someone) and cut the egg out of them?

Actually "Slaad egg pellet" sounds rather hard and unappetizing to me, maybe the embryonic Slaad that grow in its host is what's considered a delicacy. They may taste differently depending on what creature they're parasitizing.

DanSolo

06-11-2009 08:28 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

<http://hypertextbook.com/facts/AngieYee.shtml>

0.013m/s

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arion_ater

0.15m long

50ft = 15.24m

-> 101.6 times longer

If 101.6 times faster...

-> 1.32m/s

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking>

"An average walking speed is about 6 to 7 km/h"

-> 1.66m/s

Oh well, no one ever listens to us "TO SCALE!" nerds anyway.

JRM

06-11-2009 09:44 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10476688)

<http://hypertextbook.com/facts/AngieYee.shtml>

0.013m/s

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arion_ater

0.15m long

50ft = 15.24m
-> 101.6 times longer

If 101.6 times faster..
-> 1.32m/s

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walking>
"An average walking speed is about 6 to 7 km/h"
-> 1.66m/s

Oh well, no one ever listens to us "TO SCALE!" nerds anyway.

Well I'm sure you know living creatures' speed doesn't scale like that, but we might as well use that approach just for fun. There's probably magic helping out somewhere anyhow, it usually does in AD&D!

0.013m/s seems rather fast, considering all the other snailspeeds quoted in the AngieYee webpage are several times slower (0.0018-0.0034m/s, if we ignore Mr. Riseborough snail's disappointing performance).

Also, a common garden snail *Helix aspersa* is smaller than a black slug *Arion ater*, being 3-7cm or so long judging by the ones crawling around our garden, so should we be scaling by the snail or the slug?

What about this **webpage's** measurements. The measured an *Arion subfuscus* slug travelling at 36mm/min. Judging by the ruler these slugs are about 1cm long.

So, 36mm/min -> 0.6mm/s -> 0.0006m/s
Length = 0.01m

Scaling to 50 feet (15.24m) speed multiplies by $15.24/0.01 = 1524$
Speed = $0.0006 * 1524 = 0.9144\text{m/s}$.

That's about 4 km/h, or two-thirds human walking pace.

EDIT: That 0.6mm/s is a lot slower than the AngieYee speeds, if we use those 1.8-3.4mm/s for a 1cm slug we could easily get a slug that can slide as fast as a man can sprint. (It works out ~12-22 km/h)

6inTruder

06-11-2009 10:18 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

GAH!!!

I've been waiting for Slug, Giant for like EVAR! And I totally miss the start. And you don't even go into its awesome exception based design?! Like having THACO, but you roll some semi-random percentile to see if it spits on you. Seriously, WHY does it have a THACO?!

JRM

06-11-2009 05:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10477184)

GAH!!!

I've been waiting for Slug, Giant for like EVAR! And I totally miss the start. And you don't even go into its awesome exception based design?! Like having THACO, but you roll some semi-random percentile to see if it spits on you. Seriously, WHY does it have a THACO?!

Obviously it has a THACO for when it wants to bite you.

Which does a lot less less damage. (1d12 vs 4d8)

And is usually less accurate. (90% hit at under 10' range = AC6 with the slug's THACO of 9)

Why would it pick the less effective option?

Well, it's not Non-intelligent for nothing!

P.S. I did mention the percentage-based spitting. :)

Wakboth

06-11-2009 05:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'm trying to make a joke about how this entry revitalized a sluggish thread, but failing... partly because the slaadi already had everyone hopping with excitement. :D

DMH

06-11-2009 07:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

'Both, I see you back on A.net's forum and you are a dead man ;)

Anyways, what preys on giant slugs? They obviously survive to adulthood and very large sizes. It can't be just people.

noisms

06-11-2009 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10477184)

GAH!!!

I've been waiting for Slug, Giant for like EVAR! And I totally miss the start. And you don't even go into its awesome

exception based design?! Like having THACO, but you roll some semi-random percentile to see if it spits on you. Seriously, WHY does it have a THACO?!

Oh yeah, I dropped the ball on the exception based design there. But I think there have been more egregious examples - the Leprechaun, if I recall.... I'll have to go back and check.

The weird thing about the acid attack is - why does it even need to use percentiles? What's wrong with just applying penalties to hit in order to make it less accurate? Very odd.

The Last Conformist

06-12-2009 12:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10478811)

Oh yeah, I dropped the ball on the exception based design there. But I think there have been more egregious examples - the Leprechaun, if I recall.... I'll have to go back and check.

The weird thing about the acid attack is - why does it even need to use percentiles? What's wrong with just applying penalties to hit in order to make it less accurate? Very odd.

There's probably nothing particularly wrong with it - it just wasn't the first thing that occurred to the writer.

demiurge1138

06-12-2009 01:46 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10478748)

Anyways, what preys on giant slugs? They obviously survive to adulthood and very large sizes. It can't be just people.

Giant hedgehogs.

Ginkomortus

06-12-2009 01:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10480050)

Giant hedgehogs.

What, in scale with the Giant Slugs? That hedgehog has got to be huge! Like, Tarrasquean huge!

No, this is a problem solved, like many things, with a race of Hedgehogfolk.

Exception based design? They have a 100% chance of being spiky. And a 300% chance of being overwhelmingly cute.

Mr. Teapot

06-12-2009 03:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10480103)
And a 300% chance of being overwhelmingly cute.

-10% for every fifteen feet away you are from them, you mean.

Mr. Teapot

06-12-2009 03:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10477041)
That's about 4 km/h, or two-thirds human walking pace.

So then I have to ask: what does the "movement: 6" for the Giant Slug MM entry mean? It's been sufficiently long since I played 2nd ed (fifteen years or so) that I can't tell what that number means without some unit of measurement. Except I recall that when you combined the movement speeds with the one minute long combat rounds of 2nd ed, you had everyone apparently walking through molasses all the time.

Looking at humanoid creatures I see they typically have movement of 9 or 12. so that wouldn't be too far off from the projected 150% of giant slug speed. (Humans don't have a listed movement speed in the MM, for some reason.) Assuming animal speed scaled on a 1:1 ratio with size, of course. Which it obviously wouldn't.

Mikaze

06-12-2009 03:22 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The notion of anything putting a giant slug in its mouth is not conducive to one's appetite. :(

JRM

06-12-2009 05:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10480437)

So then I have to ask: what does the "movement: 6" for the Giant Slug MM entry mean? It's been sufficiently long since I played 2nd ed (fifteen years or so) that I can't tell what that number means without some unit of measurement. Except I recall that when you combined the movement speeds with the one minute long combat rounds of 2nd ed, you had everyone apparently walking through molasses all the time.

Oh blast, that means a couple of my previous posts were in error. I misread the entry the last time I looked at it, reading the HD of 12 as its movement.

Anyhows, in answer to your question, I don't remember offhand whether 2E AD&D is any different, but 1st edition AD&D scaled creature-scale movement speed as table-inches per round, where a table-inch was either 10 feet or ten yards, depending on whether the terrain was open/outdoors or not, and a round was a minute.

So, an unencumbered human with move 12 travels at $12 \times 30 \times 60 = 21,600$ feet per hour, or almost exactly 4 mph, and a giant slug with move 6 obviously travels at half that speed, or as fast as a heavily encumbered human.

Upon reflection, I'd prefer giant slugs to have move 12. The one in the Conan story could slither as fast as Conan could run.

Ginkomortus

06-12-2009 06:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10480434)

-10% for every fifteen feet away you are from them, you mean.

Eh, let's go for broke... -10% for every **sixteen** feet away you are, but with a +25% modifier if the Hedgehogfolk in question has a below average intelligence and speaks Common.

Wait, no, lolspeak is already taken by the Otyughs...

JRM

06-12-2009 07:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10481281)

Wait, no, lolspeak is already taken by the Otyughs...

In my experience otyughs never use lolspeech. Most swear worse than sailors instead, uttering a constant stream of oaths and expletives.

Well what do you expect, they're *foul mouthed*.

Strangething

06-12-2009 08:25 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Is anyone else thinking of the end of Monsters Vs Aliens?

"As we speak, Escargantuan is **very slowly** advancing on Paris."

DanSolo

06-13-2009 04:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Well I guess my idea was that even though giant slugs are pretty nasty, there's generally no need to bother fighting them. In fact, I've no idea how they make it as carnivores at all with a move of 6. What's their staple, geriatric elephants?

JRM

06-13-2009 10:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DanSolo (Post 10485801)

Well I guess my idea was that even though giant slugs are pretty nasty, there's generally no need to bother fighting them. In fact, I've no idea how they make it as carnivores at all with a move of 6. What's their staple, geriatric elephants?

Haven't you heard the maxim "Slow and steady catches the elephant?":cool:

Giant slugs may only have speed 6, but they have enormous stamina and a keen sense of smell. They simply track prey until it collapses from exhaustion, squeezing through or smashing through most obstacles they cannot circumnavigate.

For a long time, sages were puzzled how an enormous creature could pursue a man-sized victim until it drops and get enough nourishment for it to be worth the effort. The secret can be revealed in one word...

Lubrication!

Giant slug slime turns out to be magically slick until it is exposed to air for a few rounds, and this allows the slug to slide along with almost no effort at all.

The first first alchemist-engineer who discovered how to preserve its properties to oil machinery became incredibly wealthy.

Before that, slug lube was only used by the most sordid elements of society.:eek:

And people say they are useless! They're garbage disposals, a cheap source of meat, heavy-duty cargo transports, living siege engines and an abundant source of industrial acid and lubricants. Modern D&D civilization wouldn't be able to function without the noble Giant Slug!

noisms

06-18-2009 08:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sorry this took so long. Real life getting in the way again. Let's kick aside all this tumbleweed and press on with the Ss!

Snake

A marathon real-world animal entry! We haven't had one of these since I think the Ms. And another nice summary description that nobody on earth needs: "Snakes are long, slender reptiles that can be found anywhere in the entire world, even in the coldest arctic regions." Thanks for that, MM writers.

This entry gets a big thumbs up from me for all the pure instakill goodness that is distilled in it - not to mention a cool random poison generation chart, which I love.

Amphisbaena

This is a snake without a tail - both ends finish in a head, which bites to kill instantly. It travels by biting its own tail and making itself into a hoop, which then rolls around.

Boalisk

As the name suggests, a snake with deadly gaze. Except (!) it doesn't turn you to stone - it infects you with a mummy-esque rotting disease.

Constrictor Snake

You probably know what this is. Some "magical" ones can sway to hypnotise their prey as they constrict. Pretty cool, except...it only works on creatures of animal intelligence or less. Snore.

Giant Constrictor Snake

Mostly the same as above, although the 100' long "snow serpent" is also detailed. It has FUR and a pelt worth 2,000 gps.

Heway

An intelligent snake with a sinister power - the ability to exude poison through its skin, which it uses to foul water sources by swimming around in them. It then waits for the poisoned water to have its deadly effect - presumably while twirling a moustache and chuckling maniacally. It can also hypnotise potential prey and lead them back to its cave to be desired.

This snake, more than any other, should have "adventure hook" tattood on its forehead.

Poisonous Snake

Random poison generation comes into play here - the DM can roll a dice to find out what kind of poison the snake

uses. Effects range from Death to Incapacitated to "Damage".

Giant Poisonous Snake

These are all deadly; rather ambiguously we are told that "some" varieties cause 3-18 points of damage even in the event of a successful save.

Giant Sea Snake

This snake can constrict and crush small ships, which doesn't leave much hope for a single player character. Occasionally they flock in swarms of hundreds of thousands - typically the "reason is unknown" to sages. Another adventure hook for you.

Spitting Snake

These snakes spit poison, generation identically to the ordinary variety of snake. Oddly, this means that there is no blindness effect - even though the MM goes on to describe the spitting cobra as an obvious real world example. Hmm.

Jaculi

An arboreal variety which can leap on prey from up to 50' and are twice as deadly as the ordinary kind.

Elder Serpent

These creatures gain intelligence as they grow older and can speak "with a lisp". Rumours also tell of a Grand Snakemaster, an immortal serpent whose shedded skin can both heal and boost Wisdom.

DMH

06-18-2009 09:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

sim_james

06-18-2009 10:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

Siberian Snow Snake.

Wakboth

06-18-2009 10:47 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

Well, we have adders here in Finland, and apparently their range extends north of the Arctic Circle. (They spend the winters in hibernation, naturally.)

As for the entry itself, *amphisbaena* and *jaculi* come from medieval bestiaries, which probably got them from Pliny or some other classical writer. Not sure about the heway, although it sounds mythical enough.

Thane of Fife

06-19-2009 02:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

A quick google search suggests that the Heway comes from African folklore.

Also, you must have missed it Noisms, but the Spitting Snake has a very explicit line stating that its spittle can blind victims (for 2-12 hours).

Äkräs

06-19-2009 03:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10509117)
Well, we have adders here in Finland, and apparently their range extends north of the Arctic Circle. (They spend the winters in hibernation, naturally.)

Yeah, but they have a trouble multiplying there. Not enough logs, you see ...

celebrityomnipath

06-19-2009 03:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

<http://img150.imageshack.us/img150/1...owserpentc.jpg>

6inTruder

06-19-2009 04:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)
Amphisbaena

*This is a snake **without a tail** - both ends finish in a head, which bites to kill instantly. It travels by **biting its own tail** and making itself into a hoop, which then rolls around.*

So it bites its own face?

Quote:

Heway

An intelligent snake with a sinister power - the ability to exude poison through its skin, which it uses to foul water sources by swimming around in them. It then waits for the poisoned water to have its deadly effect - presumably while twirling a moustache and chuckling maniacally. It can also hypnotise potential prey and lead them back to its cave to be desired.

This snake, more than any other, should have "adventure hook" tattooed on its forehead.

Al-qadim. Which had some amazingly interesting monsters.

JRM

06-19-2009 06:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10509991)
A quick google search suggests that the Heway comes from African folklore.

Yes, it's Ethiopian, I came across an interesting account of it during my internet peregrinations at the start of the year:

Quote:

The Well of Heway

MENSA BET-ABRAHE FOLKTALE

From The Serpent's Tale By Gregory McNamee

Like many desert peoples the world over, the Mensa Bet-Abrahe of Ethiopia connect snakes real and fabulous with water. It is a useful diagnostic, for snakes are often to be found sheltering near dryland oases throughout the world.

Among the serpents there is a large snake called heway. His color is white, and his eyes are big. Now this heway kills by his leer, be it a man or an animal. But if men, before heway looks at them, notice him first and run away closing their eyes tight, they are saved from him. If, on the other hand, heway sees them first, be it a man or an animal, they die suddenly on the spot. But he is not seen very often. They say that in the days of old some people died of his glance. Once heway drank water from a well. And after him cowherds came down there and drew water for their cattle out of the well into the trough. And when the first division of the cattle had tasted the water, they fell dead.

The herdsmen went with the rest of the cattle to another well and watered them from it. And the first well they called the Well of Heway, as it is told; but they did not see heway, it may have been merely something imagined. And men say, cursing: "Drink from the Well of Heway!" And again, of a man with the evil eye they say: "His face is like that of heway; it is disagreeable."

So, basically it's the local equivalent of the medieval basilisk - a reptile so venomous it can kill you by looking at you, or by touching water you drink later. At least the Monstrous Manual version downgraded its deadly gaze to hypnotism! I suppose there may be some alternative legends where it mesmerizes its victims instead.

JRM

06-19-2009 06:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

No need, didn't you see were Noisms mentioned the furry 100' long "snow serpent"? :cool:

Clearly they're talking about the AD&D world, where the arctic is crawling with snakes, worms, giant toads and other reptiles (in the ancient Greek "crawling creature" sense of the word, reptile, of course).

Mr. Teapot

06-19-2009 06:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

I bet you can't name any fire breathing flying lizards on Earth, either. Or any lion/eagle hybrids living anywhere on this planet. Or other intelligent species of humanoids still alive. Or a lot of other things that exist in D&D or

most other fantasy fiction.

So what is your point?

JRM

06-19-2009 06:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)

Snake

Constrictor Snake

You probably know what this is. Some "magical" ones can sway to hypnotise their prey as they constrict. Pretty cool, except...it only works on creatures of animal intelligence or less. Snore.

Simple to get around that, just make it an Elder Serpent, their hypno-gaze works on people as well as animals.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)

Poisonous Snake

There's another little titbit at the end of this subentry, "lack mambas are the fastest known snakes and can reach 30 across open ground." That's movement speed 30, or faster than a race horse!

I'll note that the variable onset time for its deadly venom can be important if the party have an antitoxin or an appropriate counterspell, although if they don't it doesn't do them any good if the poison kills in 1 round or 2-8, except for giving them more time to make their own eulogy, or curse the cleric for not prepping *neutralize poison*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)

Giant Sea Snake

This snake can constrict and crush small ships, which doesn't leave much hope for a single player character. Occasionally they flock in swarms of hundreds of thousands - typically the "reason is unknown" to sages. Another adventure hook for you.

What adventure hook did you have in mind? The Sea Caballeros have to drive their hippocampus herd through a giant sea snake migration? The PCs have to defeat a coven of sea hags led by a marine green hag who have sent a (whatever the collective noun for these creatures is - an armada of giant sea snakes? a twining? a sargasso?) of these monsters to torment/extort a fishing town.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)
Elder Serpent

These creatures gain intelligence as they grow older and can speak "with a lisp". Rumours also tell of a Grand Snakemaster, an immortal serpent whose shedded skin can both heal and boost Wisdom.

I feel these have more adventuring potential, either as lowish-level opponents or creatures the PCs have to negotiate with - maybe the elder serpent knows something they want it to tell them, or they're competing with other parties for the skin the Grand Snakemaster is about to shed.

noisms

06-19-2009 10:59 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10510334)
So it bites its own face?

According to the MM one head grabs the other at the neck. Not technically the tail, I suppose.

noisms

06-19-2009 11:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10508803)
Name one arctic snake on Earth. I dare you.

Adders. (The European variety.) According to wikipedia, which as we know never lies, their range extends north of the Arctic circle.

Kakita Kojiro

06-19-2009 12:30 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)
Amphisbaena

This is a snake without a tail - both ends finish in a head, which bites to kill instantly. It travels by biting its own tail and making itself into a hoop, which then rolls around.

Warning: do *not* use a hoop-snake in a group with biologists who are somewhat whimsically immature at times... unless you want play to screech to a halt while everyone speculates how the poor thing poops.

... and then, digress onto snake reproductive organs, hemipenes, and other such. (although, that was a bit interesting.)

Sleeper

06-19-2009 12:39 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10512185)

Warning: do not use a hoop-snake in a group with biologists who are somewhat whimsically immature at times... unless you want play to screech to a halt while everyone speculates how the poor thing poops.

... and then, digress onto snake reproductive organs, hemipenes, and other such. (although, that was a bit interesting.)

The hoop-form is a biological version of a supercollider. The poop begins picking up speed as it passes repeatedly through the digestive track until it collides with poop going the other way, obliterating itself in a magical fury. This energy is used to help propel the snake forward.

Suspension of disbelief is a fragile thing :)

demiurge1138

06-19-2009 03:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10512185)

Warning: do not use a hoop-snake in a group with biologists who are somewhat whimsically immature at times... unless you want play to screech to a halt while everyone speculates how the poor thing poops.

... and then, digress onto snake reproductive organs, hemipenes, and other such. (although, that was a bit interesting.)

It poops like anything with a one-way gut. It just vomits it out. Now, the question is whether it vomits from the opposite head of the one that ingested, the same head, or if it's random...

hida_jiremi

06-19-2009 05:14 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10512654)

It poops like anything with a one-way gut. It just vomits it out. Now, the question is whether it vomits from the opposite head of the one that ingested, the same head, or if it's random...

Now I'm thinking about the possibility that one head always gets stuck with "potty duty," and seeing an encounter that goes like this:

DM: A hoop snake uncoils before you, revealing two heads--one on either end of its serpentine body!

Players: De waa?

DM: Hey, thief, you were carrying a bunch of peppermints on you, right?

Thief: Yeah, why?

DM: One head of the hoop-snake keeps making spitting motions as it lashes out at you, desperately trying to consume your backpack.

Players: De waa?

Or maybe I'm the only one amused here. :D

Jeremy Puckett

JRM

06-19-2009 05:32 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10512185)

Warning: do not use a hoop-snake in a group with biologists who are somewhat whimsically immature at times... unless you want play to screech to a halt while everyone speculates how the poor thing poops.

... and then, digress onto snake reproductive organs, hemipenes, and other such. (although, that was a bit interesting.)

Actually, the North American Hoop Snake is a different reptile, having just one head and a deadly-tail horn on the other end.

As for the Amphisbaena, maybe it has two guts with two cloaca and two sets of reproductive organs, one at each end. That could make its mating practices rather unusual.

Double the heads, double the fun.:o

Hmm, that makes me want to write a scenario were the PCs are hired to capture a live specimen of the extraordinarily rare hermaphroditic amphisbaena, that is male at one end and female at the other? Do you

have any idea how difficult it can be to determine the sex of a harmless regular snake, let alone one with a deadly venomous head at each end that wants to bite you repeatedly?

DMH

06-19-2009 08:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10510877)

I bet you can't name any fire breathing flying lizards on Earth, either. Or any lion/eagle hybrids living anywhere on this planet. Or other intelligent species of humanoids still alive. Or a lot of other things that exist in D&D or most other fantasy fiction.

So what is your point?

But those aren't based on real animals. Until this entry, all those that were based on real animals used real work information (or close to it with Peta girl).

And I find it mind boggling that there is a snake that has to hibernate for most of its life. How does it not starve every winter?

Lugh

06-19-2009 09:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10513189)

And I find it mind boggling that there is a snake that has to hibernate for most of its life. How does it not starve every winter?

Actually, most snakes *can* get by on only one good meal a year. Even most pets only eat about once a month. By going into hibernation, it essentially shuts everything down, so it doesn't need more than a bare trickle of energy.

Also, most things in the arctic starve during the winter. Watch a documentary on polar bears. They specifically have to gorge themselves all summer in order to make it through the winter.

Besides, it's considerably less weird than the toads that can hibernate. Many will burrow down into the mud at the bottom of a lake for the winter, where they don't even breathe. There have been reported cases of someone breaking open a clay brick, a toad falling out, and, after a couple minutes, hopping away.

Truth is, after all, stranger than fiction.

DMH

06-19-2009 10:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Snakes and polar bears are apples and oranges. Mammals regulate their body temperature a lot more effectively than reptiles.

I shouldn't have asked how do they keep from starving, but rather how do they keep from freezing? Snakes aren't goldfish or polar bears.

Sleeper

06-20-2009 01:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10513461)

Snakes and polar bears are apples and oranges. Mammals regulate their body temperature a lot more effectively than reptiles.

I shouldn't have asked how do they keep from starving, but rather how do they keep from freezing? Snakes aren't goldfish or polar bears.

During winter up to 65% of the water in the wood frog (which lives in most of Alaska) can freeze without harming the animal. Accumulations of urea and glucose help prevent cell damage (the bane of Disney's frozen head). Tuna, sharks and sea turtles all use different approaches, but all qualify as "warm-blooded". It's not as simple as reptiles are cold-blooded and mammals are warm-blooded; many thermoregulation strategies have appeared on many different branches of the tree of life. This complexity is why scientists have discarded the terms warm-blooded and cold-blooded in favor of more specific terms.

Lugh

06-20-2009 01:15 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10513461)

Snakes and polar bears are apples and oranges. Mammals regulate their body temperature a lot more effectively than reptiles.

I shouldn't have asked how do they keep from starving, but rather how do they keep from freezing? Snakes aren't goldfish or polar bears.

I would imagine they avoid freezing in the northern reaches of Norway much the way they do in southern Finland. What they do, I have no idea. But being able to survive several days of freezing temperatures is not significantly different from being able to survive several weeks or even months of freezing temperatures. Snakes are uncommon in Maine and Minnesota, but hardly unheard of.

They know how to do it, and that's good enough for me.

Mr. Teapot

06-20-2009 08:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10512185)

Warning: do not use a hoop-snake in a group with biologists who are somewhat whimsically immature at times... unless you want play to screech to a halt while everyone speculates how the poor thing poops.)

I thought that [Catdog](#) already answered that question for us.

Mr. Teapot

06-20-2009 09:06 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

But those aren't based on real animals. Until this entry, all those that were based on real animals used real work information (or close to it with Peta girl).

I think the animal entries that stick strictly to real world species might be in the minority, actually. In entries for mundane animals, we have a lot of fantasy creatures: the Elven Cat (under the otherwise real world "[Cat](#)" entry), Death Dogs, Blink Dogs (both "[Dog](#)"s), Osquips ("[Rat](#)"), a variety of [bats](#) and [birds](#), and a whole lot of things in the "[Mammal](#)" entry?

Or can you name one species of "intelligent ape with a reasonable grasp of the common tongue"? (Other than humans, of course, they have a separate entry.) What is the real-world habitat of the Stench Kow? Do you know of a living species of desert dwelling babboon/hyena hybrids that can *Cause Fear* by rhythmic stomping that I don't know about?

JRM

06-20-2009 05:59 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Lugh (Post 10513393)

Also, most things in the arctic starve during the winter. Watch a documentary on polar bears. They specifically have to gorge themselves all summer in order to make it through the winter.

'Fraid not, that's regular bears. Polar bears have to gorge themselves all winter in order to make it through the summer. They mainly eat seals on the pack ice, remember.

We will now return to our regular programming.

DMH

06-20-2009 06:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

[quote=Mr. Teapot;10515863]I think the animal entries that stick strictly to real world species might be in the minority, actually./QUOTE]

I meant the introduction text to the entries. Sorry if I wasn't clear.

Now I am going back to my invert books and leave those boney, icky things to you people.

JRM

06-21-2009 12:04 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10517062)

Now I am going back to my invert books and leave those boney, icky things to you people.

Invert books? Why not read right-way-up books like most of us do?

Oh, **invert***eb***rate** books.

Well, I'm all for our spineless friends. Be sure to come back when we get to the spiders, that's crammed full of scientific inaccuracy.;

Strangething

06-21-2009 07:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

According to Wikipedia, the idea of the amphisbaena rolling like a hoop snake seems to come straight from D&D.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphisbaena>

Annoyingly, the first picture on the page shows one biting it's own neck. So I could be wrong here.

The intersection of D&D and real mythology is one of my favorite subjects.

JRM

06-21-2009 10:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Strangething (Post 10518494)

According to Wikipedia, the idea of the amphisbaena rolling like a hoop snake seems to come straight from D&D.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphisbaena>

Annoyingly, the first picture on the page shows one biting it's own neck. So I could be wrong here.

The intersection of D&D and real mythology is one of my favorite subjects.

An amusing idea, but I doubt it's true. If I recall correctly, there are far older sources than D&D that describe amphisbaena as rolling along... Hmm, glancing at theoi.com's **amphisbaena entry** I see a translation of a 5th century AD source, one Nonnus, saying:

Quote:

"For as the twoheaded amphisbaina in very sooth winds the coils between and spits her poison from either mouth, **rolling along** and along with double-gliding motion, and head crawling joins with head while she jumps twirling waves of her back sideways: so that magnificent necklace twisted shaking its crooked back, with its pair of curving necks, which came to meet at the midnipple, a flexible twoheaded serpent thick with scales"

While this medieval bestiary website's **amphisbaena entry** refers to the 7th century Isidore of Seville saying:

Quote:

The amphisbaena has two heads, one in the proper place and one in its tail. It can move in the direction of either head **with a circular motion**. Its eyes shine like lamps. Alone among snakes, the amphisbaena goes out in the cold.

I don't know how accurate the translations are, but that's two centuries-old sources which appear to ascribe a rolling, circular movement to an amphisbaena, although unfortunately neither is explicit about the snake forming a ring by one set of jaws gripping the head or neck of the other end, although Nonnus's comparison to a circular necklace offers some support for that.

What we can be certain about is these old sources say amphisbaena can move both forwards and backwards with equal faculty (if such terms mean anything to a beast with a head at each end). The bit about them going out in the cold is interesting, implying some form of thermoregulation. It also helps explain why they're so aggressive, since they'll need more food to keep themselves warm.

noisms

06-22-2009 01:25 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Snake, Winged

As it says on the tin, a snake with wings. Which lives in Zakhara. Sigh. Another of those occasions where my 11 year old brain found itself wondering, "What on earth is Zakhara?" I sometimes think the setting-specific stuff was left in the MM entries in order to build up 'buzz' about Al Qadim, Forgotten Realms etc. and get more people to buy them. Cynical, moi?

Anyway, Winged Snakes are tough and annoying little blighters with poisonous bites and an electric mini-breath weapon. What surprises me, and what I'd forgotten, is that they're 8-10' long! And we're told they fly like hummingbirds. How fast would those wings have to beat in order to achieve that? An explanation of sorts is given in the text, though - Winged Snakes eat *10 times* their own body weight in fruit every day, just to stay alive. It's a wonder there's any forest left.

There are very few adventure hooks in the entry, though I suppose since Winged Snakes are said to make good pets they could feature in my amoral egg-thief campaign. However since they consume 100gp of fruit a month, it's difficult to imagine who would really want one. Maybe it's better to envisage pet Winged Snakes as the Zakhara equivalent of a white elephant - a gift one noble gives to another in a great show of generosity, while secretly sniggering into his sleeve about the enormous costs associated with the creature's upkeep?

Indeed, that would be quite a fun little adventure hook in itself I think. The PC's patron is given a Winged Snake and needs vast amounts of fruit and/or gold just to keep the thing alive. He'll give the PCs all the opium and harlots they can ever want, if they'll just keep his damned Winged Snake well fed!

Doom

06-22-2009 03:26 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Gosh, come to think of it, I don't think I EVER used the thing in any campaign...and snakes made such fun enemies, too.

DMH

06-22-2009 09:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10522184)

Winged Snakes eat 10 times their own body weight in fruit every day, just to stay alive. It's a wonder there's any forest left.

Fruit is meant to be eaten. If anything, it means the snakes make a better seed disperser than most (all?) birds. Druids and treants should love them when trying to expand the tropical forests.

Strangething

06-23-2009 02:33 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10520012)

*An amusing idea, but I doubt it's true. If I recall correctly, there are far older sources than D&D that describe amphisbaena as rolling along... Hmm, glancing at theoi.com's **amphisbaena** entry I see a translation of a 5th century AD source, one Nonnus, saying:*

Clearly you've done a more thorough search than I did. I thought the MM writers might have gotten their mythical snakes mixed up. Those quotes even justify (sorta) the amphisbaena's immunity to cold.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10522184)

Indeed, that would be quite a fun little adventure hook in itself I think. The PC's patron is given a Winged Snake and needs vast amounts of fruit and/or gold just to keep the thing alive. He'll give the PCs all the opium and harlots they can ever want, if they'll just keep his damned Winged Snake well fed!

In the next game I run, the PCs are going to get paid in opium and harlots. :-D

Mr. Teapot

06-23-2009 03:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10522184)

However since they consume 100gp of fruit a month, it's difficult to imagine who would really want one.

Adventurers. Once you're past the kobold-killing levels, you can probably afford 100GP per month. 5th level clerics and above could feed it using Create Food and Water, say. It makes enough food to feed a horse for 24 hours, though I don't know if that also means enough to feed a horse sized snake. Multiple castings would solve the issue, though.

Or GMPC archmages, though they probably don't need to worry about money anyway.

JRM

06-23-2009 03:41 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10522184)

Snake, Winged

SNIP

Winged Snakes eat 10 times their own body weight in fruit every day, just to stay alive. It's a wonder there's any forest left.

There are very few adventure hooks in the entry, though I suppose since Winged Snakes are said to make good pets they could feature in my amoral egg-thief campaign. However since they consume 100gp of fruit a month, it's difficult to imagine who would really want one. Maybe it's better to envisage pet Winged Snakes as the Zakhara equivalent of a white elephant - a gift one noble gives to another in a great show of generosity, while secretly sniggering into his sleeve about the enormous costs associated with the creature's upkeep?

Indeed, that would be quite a fun little adventure hook in itself I think. The PC's patron is given a Winged Snake and needs vast amounts of fruit and/or gold just to keep the thing alive. He'll give the PCs all the opium and harlots they can ever want, if they'll just keep his damned Winged Snake well fed!

Hmm, well that "ten times their own weight" may not be as much as it sounds. Maybe winged snakes are extremely lightweight, if not magically buoyant, like beholders and cloaklers. I suspect the enormous expense of their upkeep may be because they eat ripe jungle fruit. It would be very expensive shipping those from the jungle to your palace in the middle of the desert, or growing them in a greenhouse. As the text says, if the winged snake owner also owns a fruit orchard it costs a lot less to keep them.

As for the winged snake white elephant ploy. It'll be even better to give the Satrap a pair of winged snakes, because "winged serpents mate as often as they eat (i.e., incessantly)". Soon your noble friend could find his household swarming with the little blighters.

Although they're not entirely useless as pets. According to the Monstrous Manual they can be trained to perform tasks, including acting as guard-beasts, "although rogues have quickly discovered that unless they are extremely well-trained, they can be easily distracted by a decoy of aromatic, fresh fruit."

So remember lads, if you ever burgle a nobleman's joint, take along a nice ripe mango, just in case!

Quote:

Originally Posted by Strangething (Post 10524223)

In the next game I run, the PCs are going to get paid in opium and harlots. :-D

Considering how some PCs dispose of the profits of their adventures, that may just be cutting out the middleman!;)

Thane of Fife

06-23-2009 04:19 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

100 gp per month isn't really unreasonable. That's equivalent to the monthly wages of 10 heavy cavalrymen, 50 heavy footmen, or 2/3 of an engineer. By comparison, the example character used in the DMG to demonstrate monthly wages spends almost 3,000 gp per month.

noisms

06-23-2009 10:48 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10524665)

100 gp per month isn't really unreasonable. That's equivalent to the monthly wages of 10 heavy cavalrymen, 50 heavy footmen, or 2/3 of an engineer. By comparison, the example character used in the DMG to demonstrate monthly wages spends almost 3,000 gp per month.

I suppose when you put it like that.

Out of interest, does anybody know of any material published in the 2nd edition era on basic foundations of the economic system, e.g. how much in gps is the output of an average farm? I mean, I suppose you could work it out, but for those of us who are lazy.

I remember that section of the DMG, by the way. It was one of my favourite parts - I used to sit down and plan out how my fighter character was going to spend all of his money on a private army once he reached 9th level.

JRM

06-23-2009 05:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10525962)

Out of interest, does anybody know of any material published in the 2nd edition era on basic foundations of the economic system, e.g. how much in gps is the output of an average farm? I mean, I suppose you could work it out, but for those of us who are lazy.

Back away noisms, back away, for in that direction lies madness!:eek:

Offhand, the only thing I can recall is from BECMI, not AD&D. The higher levels of that game (Companions, if I remember correctly) include rules for profits from estates. Of course, we are talking about a game where the cost to hire some of those hirelings is a lot less than how much they'd need to spend on food, let alone their equipment, going by Player's Handbook prices. To which I can draw one of two possibilities:

(a) Hirelings don't eat, but are some sort of undead or construct. That would explain how some players treat them.:o

(b) The cost of upkeep is not included, which would put costs up considerably. I believe that's how it goes, doesn't the DMG say you have to pay for their arms & armour? If so, you'll have to pay to feed them as well.

The Last Conformist

06-23-2009 05:58 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10508723)

"Snakes are long, slender reptiles that can be found anywhere in the entire world, even in the coldest arctic regions." Thanks for that, MM writers.

While, as others have pointed out, there indeed are Arctic snakes, there aren't any in the *coldest* Arctic regions, the northernmost ones living in Arctic Scandinavia, which just happens to be the warmest part of the Arctic.

Other snake-free areas (bar escaped pets) include Antarctica (duh!), New Zealand, and, bizarrely, Ireland.

Ratoslov

06-23-2009 06:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10527107)

Back away noisms, back away, for in that direction lies madness!:eek:

Offhand, the only thing I can recall is from BECM, not AD&D. The higher levels of that game (Companions, if I remember correctly) include rules for profits from estates. Of course, we are talking about a game where the cost to hire some of those hirelings is a lot less than how much they'd need to spend on food, let alone their equipment, going by Player's Handbook prices. To which I can draw one of two possibilities:

(a) Hirelings don't eat, but are some sort of undead or construct. That would explain how some players treat them.:c

(b) The cost of upkeep is not included, which would put costs up considerably. I believe that's how it goes, doesn't the DMG say you have to pay for their arms & armour? If so, you'll have to pay to feed them as well.

There's another two possibilities, which are well off into 'crazy rationalization' territory:

(c) The prices in the book are the crazy inflated prices that adventurers pay, because adventurers are dangerous crazy people with more money than sense.

(d) It's simply assumed that the PCs are living the rock-and-roll lifestyle, and the night-at-the-inn cost includes a few kegs of wine, some groupies, and a bard. That 50' of rope? Signature of the rope-maker. Top-of-the-line.

Ursca

06-23-2009 06:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10527185)

Other snake-free areas (bar escaped pets) include Antarctica (duh!), New Zealand, and, bizarrely, Ireland.

Presumably they (along with the moles) missed the last call and didn't reach the gate before the land-bridge closed.

I can just imagine it:

'Kids! Kids! Grab your bags quickly, the land-bridge is closing!'

'But Dad, we haven't got any hands!'

noisms

06-23-2009 06:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10527185)

While, as others have pointed out, there indeed are Arctic snakes, there aren't any in the coldest Arctic regions, the northernmost ones living in Arctic Scandinavia, which just happens to be the warmest part of the Arctic.

Other snake-free areas (bar escaped pets) include Antarctica (duh!), New Zealand, and, bizarrely, Ireland.

Thank Saint Patrick for the latter.

JRM

06-23-2009 07:06 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ratoslov (Post 10527216)

There's another two possibilities, which are well off into 'crazy rationalization' territory:

(c) The prices in the book are the crazy inflated prices that adventurers pay, because adventurers are dangerous crazy people with more money than sense.

(d) It's simply assumed that the PCs are living the rock-and-roll lifestyle, and the night-at-the-inn cost includes a few kegs of wine, some groupies, and a bard. That 50' of rope? Signature of the rope-maker. Top-of-the-line.

Dang it, I was going to mention those but didn't. Oh well, no use crying over spilt milk.

There's also the explanation given in the 1st edition Player's Handbook.

(e) The high prices reflect a 'gold boom' in an adventuring area, where the price of goods is grossly inflated. (We had to ship that 10' pole through a hundred leagues of monster infested wilderness, and you expect us to sell it to you at wholesale? Dream on, Miss Adventurer!)

Mr. Teapot

06-24-2009 03:01 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10525962)

Out of interest, does anybody know of any material published in the 2nd edition era on basic foundations of the economic system, e.g. how much in gps is the output of an average farm? I mean, I suppose you could work it out, but for those of us who are lazy.

I'd think the question is not "Is there a Dragon magazine article on this?" but rather "How many conflicting Dragon magazine articles of differing eras cover this?"

Let's see... [Dragondex](#) lists four D&D articles under "[Economics](#)", one article on military logistics ("An Army Marches on Its Stomach"), a lot of articles on cost of building and maintaining castles, and an Accountant NPC class.

And that's just me skimming up through the "E"s. At that point I gave up. But I'm sure you could find something, if you cared to do so. As pointed out, D&D's economics have never made a lick of sense, and trying to make them make sense is a fool's errand. In at least one edition, they deliberately didn't work, so that high level PCs would still need to go adventuring to earn money to keep their keep running. How all those NPCs can break even much less turn a profit without a monthly dragon-slaying was never dealt with.

JRM

06-24-2009 06:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Mr. Teapot (Post 10528866)

Let's see... [Dragondex](#) lists four D&D articles under "[Economics](#)", one article on military logistics ("An Army Marches on Its Stomach"), a lot of articles on cost of building and maintaining castles, and an Accountant NPC class.

I liked "An Army Marches on Its Stomach" from Dragon #94. It's by Katherine Kerr, who's better known as a fantasy author. If I remember correctly it's stronger on ancient real-world military logistics than some of the more gonzo implications of the AD&D rules, but it's been a while since I read it.

Hmm, now I'm tempted to pull out that issue and read it again.

noisms

06-24-2009 10:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10529586)

I liked "An Army Marches on Its Stomach" from Dragon #94. It's by Katherine Kerr, who's better known as a fantasy author. If I remember correctly it's stronger on ancient real-world military logistics than some of the more gonzo implications of the AD&D rules, but it's been a while since I read it.

Hmm, now I'm tempted to pull out that issue and read it again.

I wonder if the Dragon Magazine "Let's Read" thread has got as far as 94 yet... Let me check...

Kakita Kojiro

06-24-2009 12:42 PM

Weirdly, I'm catching up on the last [Flinx & Pip](#) books. Flinx's pet is, of course, a flying snake (who is rarely mentioned needing to be fed, though). Flinx, of course, is a Marty Stu of the first water.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10527301)

(We had to ship that 10' pole through a hundred leagues of monster infested wilderness, and you expect us to sell it to you at wholesale? Dream on, Miss Adventurer!)

One of these days, I'm going to run a game where the premise is that a "goldrush" town has sprung up around a remote, newly-discovered dungeon. Adventurers are hauling out gp by the cartload (and dead companions by the bushelful). *Someone* must supply the goods they demand at ridiculously inflated prices!

I'm thinking, "Deadwood", with more rot grubs, really.

10-ft.-pole importer would be the *perfect* fit for this. Along with iron-spike maker. And the Temple of Worthy Avarice (price lists for holy water + *raise dead*). And the Random Harlot Table, of course.

**sigh* one day.*

JRM

06-24-2009 05:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10530743)

One of these days, I'm going to run a game where the premise is that a "goldrush" town has sprung up around a remote, newly-discovered dungeon. Adventurers are hauling out gp by the cartload (and dead companions by the bushelful). Someone must supply the goods they demand at ridiculously inflated prices!

I'm thinking, "Deadwood", with more rot grubs, really.

Yup, in such a place, the folks at the town can be as big a threat as the monsters. A cartload of gold is a mighty temptin' target for a bushwackin'. Heck, the prices that Necromancer will pay for fresh material, there are folks who'll attack you for just for those bushelfulls of dead companions.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kakita Kojiro (Post 10530743)

10-ft.-pole importer would be the perfect fit for this. Along with iron-spike maker. And the Temple of Worthy Avarice (price lists for holy water + raise dead). And the Random Harlot Table, of course.

**sigh* one day.*

If you think the markup on 10-foot poles is high, that ain't nothing on the price the Random Harlot Importer tags on to his wares. That's where some real money is to be made.

Adventurers get lonesome too, you know.~;)

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Spectre

There's a nice sentence in the introductory paragraph: "[Spectres] hate all life and light." That's what I want an undead being to be like. Hateful of everything - adds so much more spice to proceedings, doesn't it?

There's something spooky about the picture, too, which although not technically brilliant, has a nice haunting quality to it. Gaunt old men with long white hair wearing robes are intrinsically a bit creepy; the picture plays on that to good effect. I like it.

Substantively, Spectres are bastards - they hit to drain levels (2 at a time), creating new Spectres with each 'kill' - although they can be damaged by the traditional tools of the undead-hunting adventurer. 3,000 XP doesn't seem like nearly enough when you take into consideration its powers and HD, but I suppose the capacity to instakill it with a *raise dead* spell perhaps mitigates that.

The rest of the entry details 'Master Spectres' - those who have managed to attract other Spectre followers and create a kind of small Spectre polity. These groups would surely be unstoppable if they had a serious desire for world domination - they'd be just as effective as the zombies in the 28 [Days, Weeks] Later films, having the ability to transform entire populations of peasants into other Spectres within days (or nights). How does D&D reconcile the existence of creatures like the Spectre with the standard pseudo-European medieval world it envisages? Oh, that's right, it doesn't... Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectre who approaches with a *raise dead* spell or some holy water grenades...

DMH

06-25-2009 09:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I wonder if holy water could be used in construction and still retain its effect on undead?

Sleeper

06-25-2009 09:57 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10536753)

*The rest of the entry details 'Master Spectres' - those who have managed to attract other Spectre followers and create a kind of small Spectre polity. These groups would surely be unstoppable if they had a serious desire for world domination - they'd be just as effective as the zombies in the 28 [Days, Weeks] Later films, having the ability to transform entire populations of peasants into other Spectres within days (or nights). How does D&D reconcile the existence of creatures like the Spectre with the standard pseudo-European medieval world it envisages? Oh, that's right, it doesn't... Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectre who approaches with a *raise dead* spell or some holy water grenades...*

Undead are the H1N1 of the D&D world. If H1N1 was bitten by a radioactive spider, and developed super powers.

demiurge1138

06-26-2009 02:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Spectres are always ridiculously nasty, regardless of edition. In a 3e game I ran recently, one of the party members tangled with spectres, and was only kept alive by getting a bard song that gave him temporary hit dice. All of his actual levels were drained right out of him, poor bastard.

Belchion

06-26-2009 04:20 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10536753)

Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectre who approaches with a raise dead spell or some holy water grenades...

Most likely, the Powers That Be forbid Spectres to enter ordinary villages when there are no adventurers around. Either that, or the burying rituals do their job to well.

Thane of Fife

06-26-2009 07:05 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I've got an FR module titled Ruins of Adventure that requires the (presumably fairly low-level) PCs to fight 5 spectres(!), including 2 at one time, with the three individuals being restored every few weeks if the dungeon boss (a vampire) isn't killed. The other two reappear every time the PCs return. I can't even begin to imagine how the PCs can complete this.

On the spectre plague, I've sort of assumed that most undead hate living things because it's painful to be reminded of life, rather than because they want them dead. This explains why they tend to be found in desolate areas, as well as why they don't just swamp poor villages.

JRM

06-27-2009 12:56 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10536753)

[u]The rest of the entry details 'Master Spectres' - those who have managed to attract other Spectre followers and create a kind of small Spectre polity. These groups would surely be unstoppable if they had a serious desire for world domination - they'd be just as effective as the zombies in the 28 [Days, Weeks] Later films, having the ability to transform entire populations of peasants into other Spectres within days (or nights). How does D&D reconcile the existence of creatures like the Spectre with the standard pseudo-European medieval world it envisages? Oh, that's

right, it doesn't... Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectre who approaches with a raise dead spell or some holy water grenades...

Haven't we already had this debate at least once with other "self-spawning" undead?

Maybe AD&D doesn't get plagues of infectious undead because these monsters simply aren't pro-active enough to seek new victims. They are literally too dead inside to think of doing anything more than roaming around their grave. They will attack any humanoid that wanders into sight, but that's purely reactive, and any spectres they create are also empty heartless vessels that just loiter around simmering with malice towards the living. Before long, a spectre-ground will become known and avoided by the locals, and its only loot-hungry adventurers, necromancers and clerics who are likely to disturb them.

Alternatively, there's a pet theory I remember advancing in the previous strand of posts on this subject. There could be a limited number of "undead demonic spirits" to animate a ghoul/shadow/spectre/vampire. Therefore, once all the "spectre spirits" (however many there may be) have transformed humanoid victims into undead, there won't be any more spectres spawned until one of the current spectres is destroyed, freeing its animating demon spirit to create another, or another particularly evil soul is converted into becoming an additional "spectre spirit".

Kapten

06-27-2009 07:52 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10536753)

Spectre

There's a nice sentence in the introductory paragraph: "[Spectres] hate all life and light." That's what I want an undead being to be like. Hateful of everything - adds so much more spice to proceedings, doesn't it?

There's something spooky about the picture, too, which although not technically brilliant, has a nice haunting quality to it. Gaunt old men with long white hair wearing robes are intrinsically a bit creepy; the picture plays on that to good effect. I like it.

Substantively, Spectres are bastards - they hit to drain levels (2 at a time), creating new Spectres with each 'kill' - although they can be damaged by the traditional tools of the undead-hunting adventurer. 3,000 XP doesn't seem like nearly enough when you take into consideration its powers and HD, but I suppose the capacity to instakill it with a raise dead spell perhaps mitigates that.

The rest of the entry details 'Master Spectres' - those who have managed to attract other Spectre followers and create a kind of small Spectre polity. These groups would surely be unstoppable if they had a serious desire for world domination - they'd be just as effective as the zombies in the 28 [Days, Weeks] Later films, having the ability to transform entire populations of peasants into other Spectres within days (or nights). How does D&D reconcile the existence of creatures like the Spectre with the standard pseudo-European medieval world it envisages? Oh, that's right, it doesn't... Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectre who approaches with a raise dead spell or some holy water grenades...

An idea about why the spectres (or wights, or shadows...) don't go about world domination is that they somehow need human beings to exist.

If we go with the model that a spectre stays as a spectre to avoid eternal punishment (being undead and hateful is better than Hell), then it's in the interests of the undead to exist.

The spectre *wants* to kill all living things, but it stays its hand most of the time to not destroy itself. If it spawns, it is very careful about it. It would be mostly as a defense measure, if some high level church guy moves in close.

It would make sense anyway. World domination isn't written anywhere in spectre's/wight's/shadow's entry and since they hate everything, it wouldn't make sense for it to create another being, one that they can't hurt, without a good reason.

JRM

06-27-2009 07:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Kapten (Post 10543938)

It would make sense anyway. World domination isn't written anywhere in spectre's/wight's/shadow's entry and since they hate everything, it wouldn't make sense for it to create another being, one that they can't hurt, without a good reason.

I'd have thought a spectre would be able to hurt the spectres it spawns. It's debatable, but they should still be able to hit them, they just can't drain their levels. Even if it can't strike them physically, a spectre has control over those spawn it creates, which gives it innumerable means to inflict suffering...

"Stick your hand in that beam of sunlight, slave!"

"Gargle that holy water, scum!"

"Dance on holy ground, wretch. Dance, I say, dance!!"

"Find what you most love in the world, and bring it to me." (cue malevolent laughter)

There's a whole adventure in there, a villain who has died and returned as a spectre, who wants to turn the enemies he knew when alive into spawn to torment them for all eternity...

noisms

06-28-2009 10:36 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10545648)

I'd have thought a spectre would be able to hurt the spectres it spawns. It's debatable, but they should still be able to hit them, they just can't drain their levels. Even if it can't strike them physically, a spectre has control over those spawn it creates, which gives it innumerable means to inflict suffering...

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"Find what you most love in the world, and bring it to me." (cue malevolent laughter)

There's a whole adventure in there, a villain who has died and returned as a spectre, who wants to turn the enemies he knew when alive into spawn to torment them for all eternity...

And the PCs play the enemies! The Spectre has them trapped in an elaborate and vast labyrinth/dungeon. He's going to play with them a bit first while they're still alive, then spectre-ise them and turn them into his eternal playthings. How can they escape?

A bit like *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*.

Pukako

06-28-2009 05:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10536753)

Spectre

These groups would surely be unstoppable if they had a serious desire for world domination - they'd be just as effective as the zombies in the 28 [Days, Weeks] Later films, having the ability to transform entire populations of peasants into other Spectres within days (or nights). How does D&D reconcile the existence of creatures like the Spectre with the standard pseudo-European medieval world it envisages? Oh, that's right, it doesn't... Maybe we're to imagine that every single village in every kingdom has its own clerical secret weapon, ready to destroy any Spectr who approaches with a raise dead spell or some holy water grenades...

I've just assumed that the little rituals that the common folk need to survive have been instinctively hard-wired in by now. Think of all the little things that our ancestors/great-grandparents/even perhaps grandparents did, and all the cultural knowledge about undead, vampires, etc that became established in a world without any of these things - garlic, sacred ground, crossing oneself.

Now imagine how simple (and important) it would be to learn how to do that with most of the previously discussed monsters lurking about. Imagine biodynamics gone mad - sacrifices buried at the village corners on midsummers eve, chanting over the beer brewing, every newcomer challenged with a garland of wolvesbane, garlic flowers and whatever else they have.

So the only villages with these undead, etc problems are the ones that let the rituals slip, and that spurs the others to double their efforts, and invent a few more each generation.

It would make things a little more realistic than peasants sitting around, waiting to be enslaved, killed, infected, raised-as-undead and then killed again. I'd imagine they'd want to stop Uncle Bo being used as cannon fodder by a mad necromancer for the third time this year, and everyone knows adventurer types are too distracted by gold, level-suitable magic weapons and random harlots. Which is one way of attracting them, I guess.

Pukako

Lugh

06-30-2009 12:08 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10542300)

Alternatively, there's a pet theory I remember advancing in the previous strand of posts on this subject. There could be a limited number of "undead demonic spirits" to animate a ghoul/shadow/spectre/vampire. Therefore, once all the "spectre spirits" (however many there may be) have transformed humanoid victims into undead, there won't be any more spectres spawned until one of the current spectres is destroyed, freeing its animating demon spirit to create another, or another particularly evil soul is converted into becoming an additional "spectre spirit".

I like this. I particularly like it if each spawn is one of the original spectre's sins (or, at least, is proportional to his evil in life in some way). Once the original spectre has spread enough of his sins out into his minions, his death grip on this world is lost, and his soul goes on to its final judgment.

A clever spectre would, therefore, most want to convert terribly evil people, in an attempt to build quite a pyramid of spawn and spawn-spawn. Like multi-level marketing, only not quite as evil. Ordinary villagers are of little practical use, as they would be insufficiently evil to make good spawn. It makes far more sense to slaughter the villagers and animate them as zombies.

noisms

06-30-2009 11:00 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Sphinx

And I was just watching a documentary about world heritage sites last night - featuring the Great Sphinx and the Pyramids of Giza. And so the cosmic ballet goes on, etc.

Androsphinx

This is the male version, also depicted in the illustration - looking rather suspicious and miserable, it has to be said. We are told the Androsphinx is the most powerful. Its special weapon is its roar, which variously causes panic, paralysation and weakness.

Androsphinxes shun Gynosphinxes, because they are jealous of the female version's higher intelligence (As if! Right guys?!) and find them "hard to deal with". However, most Androsphinxes do eventually "succumb" to a Gynosphinx at least once in their life. I think you could read all kinds of interpretations into that section of the entry if you were so inclined.

The ecology section is interesting in that it postulates that Androsphinxes have no purpose, which is considered strange (why, I'm not sure - how many of the monsters in the MM have a purpose beyond making life difficult for adventurers?), but then contradicts itself in the next paragraph by contending that Androsphinxes exist to protect other sphinxes.

Criosphinx

This is a creature with the body of a winged lion but the head of a ram. They are apparently so stupid that the only sort of bargain they can strike is "safe passage or die" (which doesn't even make much sense); yet on the other hand they have average intelligence. I must have been playing my INT 9 fighter wrong in my last session - turns out he should be a complete moron if the Criosphinx is anything to go by.

Criosphinxes spend most of their lives plotting to steal the wealth of Gyrosphinxes, which they achieve by ganging up on the poor female, restraining her, and then butting heads until there's a victor who can gain the spoils. The more I think about it the more problematic this entry seems in terms of sex relations - first we have the Androsphinx with his

pathological fear of females and his distaste for the physical act, next we have the Criosphinxes whose modus operandi when dealing with females seems to be a thinly veiled metaphor for sexual violence....

Gynosphinx

This is the 'proper' sphinx, in my mind - female, into riddles and mystery, guardian of temples and ancient ruins.

Gynosphinxes continually quest for Androsphinxes, and spend most of their time in out of the way places, hoping to come across travellers who might have seen one. This seems like the best and most obvious sphinx-related adventure hook: either helping a Gynosphinx find a male or (better) trading information (i.e. the location of an Androsphinx) with a Gynosphinx in return for the location of something the PCs want (probably treasure).

Heiracosphinx

This is the evil variety of sphinx - who gang together to kill Androsphinxes and, yes, mate with Gynosphinxes. Their preferred method is to kill an Androsphinx and wait in his lair for a Gynosphinx to come along.... whereupon, well, the MM doesn't say, but I think it's pretty clear.

Those sphinxes eh? Talk about fraught sexual relations. All the females wanting sex with males who don't want to mate at all, all the while being pursued by sex-crazed rapist males who'll stop at nothing to get a hold of them. Nothing down for you if you're a Gynosphinx in the D&D world, that's for sure.

demiurge1138

06-30-2009 02:20 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Yeah, I was sort of weirded out by the sphinx sex in this book when I was a kid. I liked the idea of the non-standard sphinxes, though. I was glad to see the idea was picked up on in 3.5, with the desert book having sphinxes with the heads of crocodiles (shades of Ammut), jackals and lizards.

Wakboth

06-30-2009 05:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10555791)

Sphinx

Ooh, sphinxes. They are for some reason one of my favorite monsters ever, although I've never really had the opportunity to use them in a game...

Quote:

Androsphinx

This is the male version, also depicted in the illustration - looking rather suspicious and miserable, it has to be said.

Yeah. This is one entry that really ought to have had a DiTerlizzi-drawn cavalcade of different sorts of sphinxes, in the vein of the Beholder pics earlier...

The 4e (andro)sphinx pic is a very nice one: [Sphinx](#)

Quote:

We are told the Androsphinx is the most powerful. Its special weapon is its roar, which variously causes panic, paralysation and weakness.

The range / AoE of those roars is ginormous. A single androsphinx could rout a whole war band of orcs with just a roar or two, without staining its paws in blood...

Quote:

Androsphinxes shun Gynosphinxes, because they are jealous of the female version's higher intelligence (As if! Right guys?!) and find them "hard to deal with". However, most Androsphinxes do eventually "succumb" to a Gynosphinx at least once in their life. I think you could read all kinds of interpretations into that section of the entry if you were so inclined.

The socio-sexual relationships of the sphinx types are very, very ripe for interpretations overall.

Quote:

The ecology section is interesting in that it postulates that Androsphinxes have no purpose, which is considered strange (why, I'm not sure - how many of the monsters in the MM have a purpose beyond making life difficult for adventurers?), but then contradicts itself in the next paragraph by contending that Androsphinxes exist to protect other sphinxes.

My take was always that Androsphinxes are proud-but-gallant do-gooders, destroying/scattering invading orc warbands, saving princesses from towers, toppling evil and grasping barons and so on. Then they hang around for a while, enjoying the admiration of the grateful people, eating delicacies fed to them by pretty girls and so on, until they decide to move on - both to find new evils to vanquish, and because there inevitably are a gynosphinx or two winging their way there, attracted by their reputation.

Quote:

Criosphinx

This is a creature with the body of a winged lion but the head of a ram. They are apparently so stupid that the only sort of bargain they can strike is "safe passage or die" (which doesn't even make much sense); yet on the other hand they have average intelligence. I must have been playing my INT 9 fighter wrong in my last session - turns out he should be a complete moron if the Criosphinx is anything to go by.

They're the "jock sphinxes", I think; not so much stupid, as uninterested in applying their brains when brawn

can do.

Quote:

The more I think about it the more problematic this entry seems in terms of sex relations - first we have the Androsphinx with his pathological fear of females and his distaste for the physical act, next we have the Criosphinx whose modus operandi when dealing with females seems to be a thinly veiled metaphor for sexual violence....

Like I said, the sphinxes socio-sexual relations are *messed up*.

Quote:

Gynosphinx

This is the 'proper' sphinx, in my mind - female, into riddles and mystery, guardian of temples and ancient ruins.

"Mystery (gyno)sphinx" illustration from 4e.

Quote:

Gynosphinxes continually quest for Androsphinxes, and spend most of their time in out of the way places, hoping to come across travellers who might have seen one. This seems like the best and most obvious sphinx-related adventure hook: either helping a Gynosphinx find a male or (better) trading information (i.e. the location of an Androsphinx) with a Gynosphinx in return for the location of something the PCs want (probably treasure).

Or exchanges of strange and esoteric information.

"And that's how you can find the Evil Crypt of Abbad the Unmourned... Now, tell me more about where you heard about this nice androsphinx, and I might remember something about the traps you're going to face..."

Quote:

Heiracosphinx

This is the evil variety of sphinx - who gang together to kill Androsphinxes and, yes, mate with Gynosphinxes. Their preferred method is to kill an Androsphinx and wait in his lair for a Gynosphinx to come along.... whereupon, well, the MM doesn't say, but I think it's pretty clear.

The "bastard sphinxes", basically. Of course, both andro- and criosphinxes (boorish as those are) will also kill hieracosphinxes when they get the opportunity.

Quote:

Those sphinxes eh? Talk about fraught sexual relations. All the females wanting sex with males who don't want to mate at all, all the while being pursued by sex-crazed rapist males who'll stop at nothing to get a hold of them. Nothing down for you if you're a Gynosphinx in the D&D world, that's for sure.

Yeah. Whatever deity created the sphinxes definitely had not just issues, but whole *subscriptions*.

I wonder what kind of a perspective such a competitive (to be mild) sex life gives to sphinxes, and how they relate to humans? Going to ask a local gynosphinx - or androsphinx, for that matter - for relationship advice is probably a horribly bad idea...

"Men - either you run from them, or they run from you. The trick is knowing which is which; that's why it's always important to lair in a place with good view *and* a good, concealed escape route. Of course, you poor humans can't rely on just silhouette recognition... must be awfully complicated."

Inyssius

06-30-2009 05:18 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Yep, still great stuff. Keep being awesome, people.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10556913)
"Mystery (gyno)sphinx" illustration from 4e.

Might be a little off-topic, but I **love** the new gynosphinx. "Corrective mauling"... :D I've never even contemplated using a sphinx before (with any emotion other than mild *bleah*, at least), but now I can't wait for my chance.

JRM

06-30-2009 05:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10556528)
Yeah, I was sort of weirded out by the sphinx sex in this book when I was a kid. I liked the idea of the non-standard sphinxes, though. I was glad to see the idea was picked up on in 3.5, with the desert book having sphinxes with the heads of crocodiles (shades of Ammut), jackals and lizards.

More to the point, the reproduction rates stated in the book mean that the sphinx is a doomed species. Only the female Gynosphinxes can produce young, and it can only produce another female gynosphinx by mating with an Androsphinx, and even then only 50% of the time. Any mating with a Crio- or Hieracosphinx only produces another of those monsters. So, if on average an Androsphinx only "succumbs" once in its life, every generation the number of females will halve. No wonder some of them are desperate for sex!

So what brought about this state of affairs, some ancient curse seems most plausible. Maybe Pazuzu and Orcus cursed the original (andro & gyno) sphinxes for meddling in their affairs, hence the raptorial and ram-headed nature of their cursed offspring.

Oh, and it seems awful hard on the poor Gynosphinxes, all those rapacious sphinxes can even run and fly faster than them, so they can't even hope to flee successfully.

This situation can not be tolerated, I hereby propose that high level characters dedicate themselves to breaking this curse, both by finding the epic magic that caused it and using *polymorph other* on volunteers to turn them into Androsphinxes and Gynosphinxes so they can help replenish the population of these noble creatures.

Polymorph other, what ecological problem won't that spell solve.:D

(un)reason

06-30-2009 05:54 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10556983)

More to the point, the reproduction rates stated in the book mean that the sphinx is a doomed species. Only the female Gynosphinxes can produce young, and it can only produce another female gynosphinx by mating with an Androsphinx, and even then only 50% of the time. Any mating with a Crio- or Hieracosphinx only produces another of those monsters. So, if on average an Androsphinx only "succumbs" once in its life, every generation the number of females will halve. No wonder some of them are desperate for sex!

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*This situation can not be tolerated, I hereby propose that high level characters dedicate themselves to breaking this curse, both by finding the epic magic that caused it and using *polymorph other* on volunteers to turn them into Androsphinxes and Gynosphinxes so they can help replenish the population of these noble creatures.*

Polymorph other, what ecological problem won't that spell solve.:D

That assumes they don't produce litters of multiple young, which seems likely given their feline and avian heritages. Not as bad as the mind flayer reproduction problem though.

Although that must also mean that the young, at least the animal headed ones, are born fairly self-sufficient, or most Gynosphynx's maternal instincts are strong enough that they'll still raise the kids of those unfortunate unions, even knowing they'll grow up to be a gaggle of half-wit rapists. That's pretty fucked up as well.

Ginkomortus

06-30-2009 06:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Okay, first off... did Sphinx get brought up with the rest of the Greco-Roman monster names with debatable pluralism?

Second off...

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10555791)

*Criosphinxes spend most of their lives plotting to steal the wealth of **Gyrosphinxes**...*

Maybe it's just sleep dep, but this typo amuses me. I imagine a sphinx rolling around on a central ball embedded in her belly instead of running about on feet.

Inyssius

06-30-2009 06:05 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10557001)

That assumes they don't produce litters of multiple young, which seems likely given their feline and avian heritages. Not as bad as the mind flayer reproduction problem though.

What is the mind flayer reproduction problem? I can't find any discussion of it in the relevant place.

Sleeper

06-30-2009 06:11 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Now I'm picturing androsphinxes as a snobby clique of androgynous artist-types, who are scared of girls. Strange industrial music, strobing lights, black tights, John Lennon-glasses, mime-like interpretative dance, names like Dieter and Gunter.

(un)reason

06-30-2009 06:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10557031)

What is the mind flayer reproduction problem? I can't find any discussion of it in the relevant place.

Each can produce 2 tadpoles in their lifespan, each of which has a 10% chance of reaching maturity. So their population should divide by over 5 every generation.

Inyssius

06-30-2009 06:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10557047)

Each can produce 2 tadpoles in their lifespan, each of which has a 10% chance of reaching maturity. So their population should divide by over 5 every generation.

Yeesh. Can't fix *that* with psionic tomfoolery.

Or can you?

Sleeper

06-30-2009 06:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssius (Post 10557055)

Yeesh. Can't fix that with psionic tomfoolery.

Or can you?

In 3E's *Lords of Madness*, the illithid fled back through the ages to escape the end of time. The modern mind flayer is a refugee from a time when the stars were sputtering, and going out.

The dequinting, the dividing by five, is only a problem if time is a strictly linear thing. Perhaps the pools they dwell in as tadpoles are vortices, spirals. Places where the normal timeflow catches in an eddy, and spins around backward. So instead of a doubled decimation every generation, the flopping spawn somehow multiply themselves fivefold.

How many illithid survived the transit? A fleet? A single ship? A bare handful of individuals? Maybe just maybe there was only a solitary illithid who was able to walk away from the time wrack, with tentacles stills fluttering. Who stood over the inky pool where things spun backward, and brooded and thought and suddenly came to a realization. Then, in a scant few years, there was one, plus five. Then thirty six. And on, and on. Spreading like a fungus, there in the dark.

Wakboth

06-30-2009 07:43 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10557001)

Although that must also mean that the young, at least the animal headed ones, are born fairly self-sufficient, or mos

Gynosphynx's maternal instincts are strong enough that they'll still raise the kids of those unfortunate unions, even knowing they'll grow up to be a gaggle of half-wit rapists. That's pretty fucked up as well.

I've spent way too much time pondering the sphinxes effed-up life, but the idea I had was that the mating of an androsphinx and a gynosphinx always produces twins, one of either sex. And... yeah, strong instincts and all that. (To reduce squick, I also decided that a) crio- and hieracosphinxes don't do harems, and b) the offspring of a particular gynosphinx recognize and ignore their mother later in life.)

noisms

06-30-2009 07:49 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10557026)

Okay, first off... did Sphinx get brought up with the rest of the Greco-Roman monster names with debatable pluralism?

Second off...

Maybe it's just sleep dep, but this typo amuses me. I imagine a sphinx rolling around on a central ball embedded in her belly instead of running about on feet.

It's a little known sub-species.

JRM

06-30-2009 08:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Inyssiis (Post 10556930)

*Might be a little off-topic, but I **love** the new gynosphinx. "Corrective mauling"... :D I've never even contemplated using a sphinx before (with any emotion other than mild bleah, at least), but now I can't wait for my chance.*

At last the truth is out! Androphinxes are not reluctant to mate with Gynosphinxes because they resent their intelligence, but because lady sphinxes are into S&M.:o ;)

JRM

06-30-2009 08:19 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10557001)

That assumes they don't produce litters of multiple young, which seems likely given their feline and avian heritages. Not as bad as the mind flayer reproduction problem though.

Although that must also mean that the young, at least the animal headed ones, are born fairly self-sufficient, or most. Gynosphinx's maternal instincts are strong enough that they'll still raise the kids of those unfortunate unions, even knowing they'll grow up to be a gaggle of half-wit rapists. That's pretty fucked up as well.

I'd considered that possibility, but the Monstrous Manual entry says "A gynosphinx mated with an androsphinx will produce **another** androsphinx or gynosphinx (even chances for both). A gynosphinx mated with a criosphinx only produces **another** male criosphinx, while mating with a hieracosphinx produces similarly displeasing results."

Those bolded words suggest one offspring is the norm.

Armitage

06-30-2009 08:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by (un)reason (Post 10557047)

Each can produce 2 tadpoles in their lifespan, each of which has a 10% chance of reaching maturity. So their population should divide by over 5 every generation.

The Illithiad, the 2e Mind Flayer sourcebook, clarified that an illithid produces two clutches of 1,000 eggs in its lifetime. On average, one tadpole from each clutch survives to adulthood. So the population doubles each generation.

The Last Conformist

06-30-2009 09:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Ginkomortus (Post 10557026)

Okay, first off... did Sphinx get brought up with the rest of the Greco-Roman monster names with debatable pluralism?

Lat. pl *sphinges*.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10557436)
Lat. pl sphinges.

Not according to theo.com, which says the plural is **sphinxes** in both Greek and Latin.

Which would mean the MM got it right for once.:)

Oh, and it also says **sphinx** derives from "strangler" (sphinggein).

Which is odd, since I don't think of them as throttling victims, but rending them with claw and fang.

EDIT: Oh, and it also says a homonym for "sphinx" is "phix" or "fix". That offers potential of all manner of dreadful puns...

Maybe a phix is a sphinx that can't have children after being taken to the vets, or it derives from their preferring to "fix" problems with their claws and teeth.

EDITED EDIT: Although as far as the plural goes, I can see it going both ways, like the word "larynx" which is accepted as either "larynxes" or "larynges" in English, although the latter is probably the better Greek.

The Last Conformist

06-30-2009 10:44 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10557540)
*Not according to theo.com, which says the plural is **sphinxes** in both Greek and Latin.*

Here theoi.com is wrong - see eg. the [Liddell & Scott entry](#).

(Moreover, the Pliny section they cite doesn't mention sphinxes at all - the one that does uses the Greek accusative plural *sphingas*, implying nominative plural *sphinges*.)

Quote:

Which would mean the MM got it right for once.:)

The MM is written in English, in which language "sphinxes" is the usual form. :)

Quote:

Oh, and it also says **sphinx** derives from "strangler" (sphinggein).

Which ought suggest the stem is *sphing-*, not *sphinx-* (which would be a very weird stem anyway).
(Also, *sphinggein* would have to be a verb "to strangle", not an agental noun.)

Strangething

07-01-2009 04:12 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10556913)

The socio-sexual relationships of the sphinx types are very, very ripe for interpretations overall.

Like I said, the sphinxes socio-sexual relations are messed up.

Yeah. Whatever deity created the sphinxes definitely had not just issues, but whole subscriptions.

Quoted for truth. There is a lot of scary sexual stuff implied in the monster manual (See minotaur, harpy.) but the sphinx is the scariest of the lot. I'm not sure what that says about Gygax, et al.

celebrityomnipath

07-01-2009 09:37 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Armitage (Post 10557360)

The Illithiad, the 2e Mind Flayer sourcebook, clarified that an illithid produces two clutches of 1,000 eggs in its lifetime. On average, one tadpole from each clutch survives to adulthood. So the population doubles each generation.

One tadpole from each clutch survives because teh tadpoles are all kept in the same place, nom nom nom.

Thane of Fife

07-01-2009 10:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Strangething (Post 10559009)

Quoted for truth. There is a lot of scary sexual stuff implied in the monster manual (See minotaur, harpy.) but the sphinx is the scariest of the lot. I'm not sure what that says about Gygax, et al.

What's scary about the harpy? The book explicitly suggests that they reproduce asexually.

JRM

07-01-2009 04:02 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10557735)
Here theoi.com is wrong - see eg. the Liddell & Scott entry.

The MM is written in English, in which language "sphinxes" is the usual form. :)

Ta for that, I suspected you were right about the sphinges because of larynx/larynges but I know very little classical languages. It's nice to have some evidence.

JRM

07-01-2009 04:30 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10560384)
What's scary about the harpy? The book explicitly suggests that they reproduce asexually.

Maybe Strangething was thinking of the Piers Anthony version, which had to alternately mate with vultures and humanoids to maintain its species? At least, they did until they got a Harpy Prince.

Strangething

07-02-2009 12:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Thane of Fife (Post 10560384)
What's scary about the harpy? The book explicitly suggests that they reproduce asexually.

Really? It's been a while since I read my 2e monster books, but I had the impression that harpies mainly reproduced via mind control rape of male humanoids. There goes a creepy adventure idea.

Maybe after reading the minotaur and sphinx entries, I started to assume that any monster than only comes in one gender must have something horribly kinky going on.

I used to have a list of D&D monsters with sex and gender issues, but I lost it. There were about ten of them. And another list of intelligent creatures with no hands.

EDIT: I made the lists with the 3e MM, which doesn't go into detail on monster reproduction. I saw an all-female race with hypnotic powers and assumed they were like a female version of minotaurs.

noisms

07-03-2009 12:01 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Spider

Ah, the Spider. Eight legged and eight eyed denizen of silky webs. Great bog-standard monsters to introduce into a game, as I'm sure most will agree. The MM separates them into "hunting" spiders (which simply run down and eat prey) and "web spinners" (obviously the ones which use silk to catch prey). This entry is notable as the only one in the MM (I think) to contain sub-sub entries, which is a bit of a pain for the purposes of people writing about it on rpg.net twenty years later. It also must be the record holder for the most varieties of exception-based strength check in a single entry - every single sub-variety of spider requires a slightly different rule and a slightly different modifier to escape from its webs.

The intelligence scores for Spiders are interesting: Hairy Spiders have Low (5-7), Large Spiders Nil (0), Huge Spiders Animal (1) and Giant Spiders Low again (5-7). There doesn't seem to be much of an explanation for this variance.

Hairy Spider

These are smallish (6") swarming creatures which can cover a humanoid being and bite with bonuses to hit; their poison is debilitating. Twenty of the things could quite easily kill even a relatively high level character (death of a thousand cuts), which justifies the high XP value for a 1-1 HD monster (65). Hairy Spiders can also be used as familiars, often by drow.

Large Spider

This is a web spinner, 2' in diameter, which uses silk and poison (Type A) to capture enemies.

Huge Spider

This hunting spider is 6' in diameter and attacks by leaping (up to 30'). It lies in ambush in camouflaged tunnels.

- Watch Spiders are a sub-variety of Huge Spider; their intelligence (5-7) means they can be trained. Their poison is paralyzing.

Giant Spider

These are the kind of fantasy spider which I suppose most people envisage - lurking somewhere in Mirkwood, most likely. In fact it's a catch-all term for a wide variety of Giant Spiders (although there's also a standard web-spinning fatally poisonous type):

- Giant Water Spiders, which live in a burrows underwater, filled with pockets of air. They grab prey and drag them into their burrow to eat at their leisure.
- Flying Spiders, which have wings of gossamer, which strike me as vaguely silly.
- Giant Trapdoor Spiders, which lurk behind trapdoors (obviously) and leap out to attempt to drag victims back

inside. They can shoot silk to entangle victims.

- Steeders, which are used as mounts by Duergar, can cling to walls and ceilings, and can leap up to 240'.

Phase Spider

These are annoying beggars which can phase into the prime material, attack, then phase back to the ethereal plane, all in one round - often without right of reply. A great monster for forcing the players to be cunning, or a huge pain in the arse, depending on your D&D philosophy.

Sword Spider

This variety jumps at opponents and impales prey on its legs. Like most other varieties it has been in some way domesticated by Drow.

Gargantuan Spider

Shelob, basically. This spider is not only 80% undetectable, it also gives opponents a -5 penalty to surprise rolls - something seems slightly off there. It is a genius with webs, and can make any shape it has ever seen out of its silk - rather like an eight-legged clown making stuff out of balloons.

- Giant Marine Spiders are a variety of Gargantuan Spider which live in burrows near salt water bodies. Otherwise they're basically a bigger version of the Giant Water Spider.

Sleeper

07-03-2009 01:12 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10569420)

- Giant Trapdoor Spiders, which lurk behind trapdoors (obviously) and leap out to attempt to drag victims back inside. They can shoot silk to entangle victims.

When I first ran across D&D's trapdoor spider, I was already familiar with the real animal. You know, the little forest-dweller that digs into the loam, and then makes a little plug of leaves and dirt and sticky silk that fits into the neck of its burrow. Along comes a beetle with its thundering feet and *pop* out comes the plug like the cork from a wine bottle, and suddenly the beetle becomes arachnofood. I just played the monster as a slightly large version.

Which is a shame. That was such an obvious opportunity to add yet one more group of monsters to the wondrous web that is D&D's dungeon ecology. Trap door spiders aren't forest dwellers, not in D&D. They don't make little plugs out of dirt and sticky bodily fluids. No, they're dungeon dwellers who have evolved into a very narrow, very precise niche.

Because dungeons have a very specific geometry. There are hundreds of levels or floors, each on a different horizontal plane. There are no slow rises, half-levels, cupolas, or anything like that except the occasional dias or terrace. The number of architectural features that break the third dimension is very limited. The most common of course is stairs. Between each level there is at least one stair going up to a place where the denizens are slightly weaker, and one stair going down to a realm where the inhabitants are slightly more deadly.

Like in children's games, there are also chutes and ladders. Ladders go up and down, allowing recurrent villains to flee and hide among even more dangerous allies. Or allow mookish orcs to laugh and throw produce down at the band of fierce warriors from a position of relative safety (at least once the rope ladder is hauled up).

Chutes or gates are much more nasty because they can shunt your 2nd-level butt from Kobold Country all the way down to the Flaming Fire Demon Halls. This is what makes the dwarf one of the most valuable of all companions, when you're grubbing for blood money in a filthy hole in the ground. Because they can squint and stare, make a few obscure comments in the arcane jargon of geologyspeak, perform a few calculations on the back of a napkin, and tell you, with some degree of certainty, just exactly how screwed the party is after sliding down a chute or bumping into a random teleporter. Was your band of much-victimized companions only shuttled down a level or two down to Ogrevania, where it's still possible to sneak and scrabble and evade and maybe just maybe make it back to the Town squatting like a mother hen over the top of all the staircases? Or did the mossy spiral or strange glyph spin them down and down to the Beholder Den, where the only real question left is whether your corpse will be bloody, dusty, or rocky?

This is the world to which the trap door spider has adapted. Because every once in a while, under random carpet on the otherwise bare stone floor, or seen high up in the air in a particularly high-vaulted cavern, there is a square wooden door. The kind you'd find leading into root cellars, on the surface. Another connection between the levels. And if you're underneath and you look closely, you might spot a black ball surrounded with what appears to be black yarn. Then they twitch, and you realize you're looking at a spider. A spider that evolved to prey on adventurers steeling themselves for a plunge into a new, more dangerous level. Like their forest dwelling brethren, they pop the door and jump, and all of a sudden the elf who had gotten comfortable with the hazards of level 3 is snatched away by a level 4 monster that just came up through the floor. Is the party hardy and well-rested enough to plan a rescue, or is destiny going to have to work a bit overtime to bring them a new ally to round out their company of erstwhile heroes?

This of course, is only the tip of the iceberg. Where there are trap door spiders, there are also concealed door spiders, secret door spiders, one-way door spiders, iron door spiders, wooden door spiders, locked door spiders, teleport gate spiders, and who knows how many other variants. They're like elves, these arachnids. Let them run loose in a dungeon for a millennium or two, and all of a sudden they all have different hairstyles and new favorite cribs.

Inyssiis

07-03-2009 01:51 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10569420)

- Giant Water Spiders, which live in a burrows underwater, filled with pockets of air. They grab prey and drag them into their burrow to eat at their leisure.

Ah, the [diving-bell spider](#). These guys are *so cool*.

<http://img183.imageshack.us/img183/4...rspideruu4.jpg>

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10569420)

Spider

Great! We've finally come to one of my favourite entries. I love using overlarge spiders in my games, and am fond of them in real life too.

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10569420)

The intelligence scores for Spiders are interesting: Hairy Spiders have Low (5-7), Large Spiders Nil (0), Huge Spiders Animal (1) and Giant Spiders Low again (5-7). There doesn't seem to be much of an explanation for this variance.

This is one of the things I felt was missing when 3rd edition came out. Intelligent (or sem-intelligent) giant spiders just felt right, not the mindless Monstrous vermin in the 3E Monster Manual. This is mainly because I was fond of *The Hobbit* as a kid. Heck, I've even had my players encounter *talking* giant spiders in AD&D (I'm talking about the regular low-average intelligence variety, not spell-casting aranea or something. There's nothing in 1st edition that says they can't talk.:mad:).

They started cutting deals with them...

I won't go into my detailed thoughts on this Monstrous Manual entry right now, since I've got work to do. However, before I go I'll just mention the MM's illustration (which looks like a dT picture, unless I'm mistaken) is nice. Its half-human face reinforce that "unnatural intelligent spider-ish creature" vibe. Oh, and it's also obviously not a true spider. Look at those thin 2nd legs, it's based on an **Amblypygi**, or whip spider. I suspect the artist was fully aware of the difference, and I like to think this is meant to represent the flat-bodied gargantuan whisper spider.

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10569621)

This of course, is only the tip of the iceberg. Where there are trap door spiders, there are also concealed door spider: secret door spiders, one-way door spiders, iron door spiders, wooden door spiders, locked door spiders, teleport gate spiders, and who knows how many other variants. They're like elves, these arachnids. Let them run loose in a dungeon for a millennium or two, and all of a sudden they all have different hairstyles and new favorite cribs.

Great stuff Sleeper, I've thought of the Dungeon Trapdoor spider (Mine usually hid beneath flagstones rather

than actual trapdoors), but never thought of expanding the idea to iron doors and teleport gates - maybe the latter is how phase spiders came about.

I like the AD&D versions of the spiders so much I've converted most of them to 3rd edition together with the oldschool classic the tarantella spider, whose venom forces its victims to dance. Needless to say, I couldn't stop there and began coming up with ideas for new fabulous spiders that I'd like to stat up, such as:

The Crystal Spider or Glassteel Spider, which is invisible when stationary and spins razor sharp webs that slashes PCs to ribbons if (when) they walk into them.

The Puppeteer Spider, which throws its silk lines upon a characters limbs and forces them to attack their comrades.

The Harper Spider, which plays mesmerizing music upon its web.

The Pirate Spider, plundering the high seas with cutlass and crossbow.

The Caballero Spider, which rides across the pampas, bringing down its prey with bolas and whips.

OK, I may have to rethink the last few.:D

Should get around to posting those I've finished, so my fellow gamers may get some use out of them.

Has anyone else some more ideas for fantasy spiders, I think I'll add some of Sleeper's to my Spider project list: (trap door spiders, concealed door spiders, secret door spiders, one-way door spiders, iron door spiders, wooden door spiders, locked door spiders, teleport gate spiders)

Hmm...

Dungeon Door Spiders (wooden, concealed, one-way, locked)
Iron Door Spider (presumably super-tough)
Secret Door Spider (sound like my flagstone trapdoor spider will do)
Teleport Portal Spider (phase spider plus!)
Trapdoor Spider (Could actually build traps, silk devices hurling envenomed spikes?)

Here's one to add:

Portcullis Spider (drops the gate onto the party?, impaling fun!)

Anyone else got any ideas?

DMH

07-03-2009 08:16 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

The only real spiders I wished they included are the ogre faced (which uses a miniature web in its forelegs) and the one whose name escapes me (red something or other) which uses high tension strands to draw prey up to it. Sort of a cave fisher with hundreds of strands at the same time.

The Last Conformist

07-03-2009 08:33 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by noisms (Post 10569420)

Flying Spiders, which have wings of gossamer, which strike me as vaguely silly.

There are real spiders that fly, or rather paraglide, with the help of their webs. Which gives me one of those ideas I'll never use; a mercenary band of intelligent human-sized commando spiders that specialize in parachuting inside city walls and the like to open the gates and allow their employers in. They'd prefer repeating crossbows for weaponry.

JRM

07-03-2009 08:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10570593)

The only real spiders I wished they included are the ogre faced (which uses a miniature web in its forelegs) and the one whose name escapes me (red something or other) which uses high tension strands to draw prey up to it. Sort of cave fisher with hundreds of strands at the same time.

There are quite a few species of **Theridiid** spider that use this method to catch prey. For those unfamiliar with the creatures, the silk lines in question are under tension so when a ground insect blunders into the bottom of a line and gets stuck, it breaks it off the ground in its struggles and gets hoist into the air.

I also like the bolas spider, which swings a line of silk with a sticky glob on the end to snare moths, which it attracts with a scent mimicking female moth pheromone.

The thing is, since AD&D giant spiders are intelligent, they can learn these tricks with silk, so any given spider of the same "species" may know any of a wide range of silken tactics, not just the few its mindless, instinctive real-life counterparts do.

demiurge1138

07-03-2009 11:17 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

JRM, the puppeteer spider's been done. Creature Collection 3 had the "grim puppeteer", an intelligent spider that uses the dessicated corpses of its victims, ventriloquism, and strategically placed webbing to create puppet shows to lure people into dangerous doomy areas. I used one and it freaked my players out... especially when it started following them, riding on the corpse-puppet's back and tromping through the night.

Ginkomortus

07-04-2009 03:02 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10557042)

Now I'm picturing androsphinxes as a snobby clique of androgynous artist-types, who are scared of girls. Strange industrial music, strobing lights, black tights, John Lennon-glasses, mime-like interpretative dance, names like Dieter and Gunter.

ZIS IS ZE TIME ON RPG.NET D20 FORUM VHEN VE DANCE!

Also, the harper spider above is a nifty idea.

Sleeper

07-04-2009 03:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10570529)

The Pirate Spider, plundering the high seas with cutlass and crossbow.

That's a surprisingly good fit. Not necessarily a pirate per se, but a high seas spider. Ships made of debris or living wood, held together by webbing. On the bottom, the hull is made of driftwood and other scrap pieces of dead wood; on the top, the deck, is a layer of loam that supports living trees, that are suspended in great bags that hold just enough dirt to sustain them. The rigging is a latticework or maze of braided and netted webs. Small strands catch the sea spray, which slides down the line to the plants to provide the needed liquid. They're not pirates for gold and booty; they're pirates for blood. Strung across the highest crossbars are the captured humanoids, wrapped up into cotton-candy bundles and waving in the wind, ready to be punctured. Once drained to a dessicated husk, the body goes into the topsoil and feeds the trees.

I also like the image of phase spiders popping out of teleport gates, and then back. Maybe the phasing only works within a certain range of a portal.

JRM

07-04-2009 06:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10571064)

JRM, the puppeteer spider's been done. Creature Collection 3 had the "grim puppeteer", an intelligent spider that uses the dessicated corpses of its victims, ventriloquism, and strategically placed webbing to create puppet shows to lure people into dangerous doomy areas. I used one and it freaked my players out... especially when it started following them, riding on the corpse-puppet's back and tromping through the night.

That doesn't surprise me, but I don't see why I can't do a version of my own. Actually, I'm thinking of doing a couple of versions, with one of them a psionic mind-slaver inspired by the giant spiders in Jon Pertwee's last Doctor Who story.

I've also seen a version of the Crystal spider somewhere before. Obviously, I'm not the only one who's seen Krull and thought "there's something I can steal for a D&D monster."

JRM

07-04-2009 07:03 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10571842)

That's a surprisingly good fit. Not necessarily a pirate per se, but a high seas spider. Ships made of debris or living wood, held together by webbing. On the bottom, the hull is made of driftwood and other scrap pieces of dead wood, on the top, the deck, is a layer of loam that supports living trees, that are suspended in great bags that hold just enough dirt to sustain them. The rigging is a latticework or maze of braided and netted webs. Small strands catch the sea spray, which slides down the line to the plants to provide the needed liquid. They're not pirates for gold and booty; they're pirates for blood. Strung across the highest crossbars are the captured humanoids, wrapped up into cotton-candy bundles and waving in the wind, ready to be punctured. Once drained to a dessicated husk, the body goes into the topsoil and feeds the trees.

Yes, that's similar to one of the pirate spider ideas I had, although they'd usually have humanoid ships they'd overrun as the basis for their colony and they could spin sails, rigging and fishing nets from their silk.

I was also thinking they could skate across the water's surface like **pond skimmers**.

demiurge1138

07-04-2009 02:42 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

No discussion of giant spiders in fantasy is complete without the Weaver, that demented embodiment of chaos from the works of China Mieville. An entity of godlike power, the Weaver considers himself to be what weaves the strings of fate and circumstance together to create reality. He's also very capricious--he currently dwells in the basement of the Government in New Crobuzon, and the Mayor appeases him with whatever phenomenon he's decided is fascinating at the moment--in the book, at least for a while, he's obsessed with the sound that scissors make. He's also got a wierd sing-song stream of consciousness speech pattern, which I have duplicated for my own crazy capricious giant spider NPCs (it comes up more often than you might think) to great effect.

Sleeper

07-04-2009 04:04 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

With all the giant bugs, vermin, what have you; the creepy-crawly stuff that causes queasiness and screams in humans even when so itty-bitsy they're relegated to climbing up the water spout... you'd think along with the *mattock*, *maul*, and *spade of the titans* there'd also be a *flyswatter of the titans*....

Or I suppose you could turn that into an adventure hook. Titan wanders by the local village. The kids are goggling, the parents wave politely, but with that certain degree of apprehension reserved for anything with as many hit points as the entire collective village. He waves back jovially at the tiny little human-shaped specks, and thuds on his way. Then, suddenly, the whole town shakes and quivers as he lets loose an earthshaking scream. The distant figure stumbles backward arms flailing, and falls down. All is quiet. What happened? Time for a convenient adventuring party to show

up, and be nudged ever-so-subtly in the direction of the supine titan.

The big guy fainted, obviously. Saw a big nasty spider. Well, big as a mundane spider is to a human. Kind of smallish, as giant ones go. Certainly within the capabilities of the local posse to take out.

This could even have happened months ago. Titans are bigger in every way. Size, laughter, mood swings... and length of unconsciousness. Could be a week before he wakes up. Could be a century. The townsfolks certainly don't know. They've just been living as shut-ins, too terrified to go out. After all, whatever knocked the titan prone, well, if it took out one of *them*, what could it do to *us*...?

The kids are going batty, too. Their mas and pas have them locked up inside because the parental units know perfectly well that inside every child is an adventurer desperately trying to get out and get killed. Once the brats're out of sight they'll be on their way toward the fallen semi-god lickety split-like. Maybe a couple of the plumper and slower ones'll be strung up like hobbits in Mirkwood.

Wakboth

07-04-2009 04:34 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10571842)

That's a surprisingly good fit. Not necessarily a pirate per se, but a high seas spider. Ships made of debris or living wood, held together by webbing. On the bottom, the hull is made of driftwood and other scrap pieces of dead wood, on the top, the deck, is a layer of loam that supports living trees, that are suspended in great bags that hold just enough dirt to sustain them. The rigging is a latticework or maze of braided and netted webs. Small strands catch the sea spray, which slides down the line to the plants to provide the needed liquid. They're not pirates for gold and booty; they're pirates for blood. Strung across the highest crossbars are the captured humanoids, wrapped up into cotton-candy bundles and waving in the wind, ready to be punctured. Once drained to a dessicated husk, the body goes into the topsoil and feeds the trees.

Brilliant. Now... they're obviously facing ninja spiders, then?

Inyssius

07-04-2009 04:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10574023)

Brilliant. Now... they're obviously facing ninja spiders, then?

Isn't that the default?

JRM

07-04-2009 06:31 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Wakboth (Post 10574023)
Brilliant. Now... they're obviously facing ninja spiders, then?

Pah, those ninja spiders don't have a chance, for they do not know they will face the ***Dread Pirate Spider Roberts.***;))

noisms

07-06-2009 12:10 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I'll be away for the next few days on business, so it's unlikely there'll be an update.

In any case we're getting towards the 1000 post point for Part IV, so I'll start a Part V thread with the Sprite entry when I get back. Keep your eyes peeled - I'll post a link in this thread to the new one anyway.

DMH

07-06-2009 08:35 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I was digging around in my invert books and magazines and found 3 more real species I wish they could have included - jumping spiders (watch 8 Legged Freaks for how to use them), social spiders (how they share food is interesting) and the vegetarian ninja spiders (who steal from leaf cutter ants). Though the last one couldn't be in the book since they were described last year.

And what about the whip spiders and sun spiders from 1e - were they ever included in 2e?

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10570671)
The thing is, since AD&D giant spiders are intelligent, they can learn these tricks with silk, so any given spider of the same "species" may know any of a wide range of silken tactics, not just the few its mindless, instinctive real-life counterparts do.

Thinking about this, I came up with spiders that use ballistas, hanging boulders, cover silk bridges with stones or sticks and have domesticated cave crickets, piercers or rats. I also got a couple ideas for spiders and water - the standard giant uses silk nets to catch fish and the giant diving bell makes something like a beaver dam/fish weir to bottleneck the river and bring prey to them.

Mikaze

07-07-2009 01:58 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Earlier it was asked if anyone remembered Sirines being used in official product.

I just remembered a doozy:

Planar adventure(Planescape-ish, but printed outside the Planescape imprint) involving a cloud giant pimp based on Dolemite and his band of kung-fu Sirine prostitutes. By Chris "Green Ronin" Pramas of all people.

JRM

07-07-2009 07:24 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10581783)

I was digging around in my invert books and magazines and found 3 more real species I wish they could have included- jumping spiders (watch 8 Legged Freaks for how to use them), social spiders (how they share food is interesting) and the vegetarian ninja spiders (who steal from leaf cutter ants). Though the last one couldn't be in the book since they were described last year.

I like to imagine Hairy Spiders as a good candidate for acting like social spiders, or rather as super-social spiders since they've got Low (5-7) intelligence. They're individually weak but can be encountered in large numbers and, importantly, are Neutral Evil rather than Chaotic Evil like the majority of sapient AD&D spiders. Plus, the MM says "Up to 40 hairy spiders can swarm a human-sized victim".

Imagine scores of the little blighters plotting together and then working in concert to kill foes many times their size, like land piranhas with poison and brains.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10581783)

And what about the whip spiders and sun spiders from 1e- were they ever included in 2e?

I understand there are stats for other kinds of arachnids in 2nd edition's ***The Drow of the Underdark***.

Unfortunately, I don't have it, but according to wikipedia it has both kinds of whip-scorpion (Schizomida and Uropygi/Thelyphonida), whip-spiders (Amblypyg) and sun spiders (Solifugid).

I expect they just recycled the stats from the 1st edition versions that debuted in Queen of the Demonweb pits.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10581783)

Thinking about this, I came up with spiders that use ballistas, hanging boulders, cover silk bridges with stones or sticks and have domesticated cave crickets, piercers or rats. I also got a couple ideas for spiders and water- the standard giant uses silk nets to catch fish and the giant diving bell makes something like a beaver dam/fish weir to bottleneck the river and bring prey to them.

Some good ideas there DMH. I've been thinking about sapient giant spiders keeping livestock, fishing with nets and setting up traps. There are all manner of other things they can do with silk - snares that hoist a victim into the air, alarm-wires, net-covered concealed pits.

Not sure why they'd bother covering a silk bridge with stones or sticks though.

I'd think ballistae are too complicated for a typical intelligent spider to use though, since they are relatively complicated devices to set up and tune. Most sapient AD&D spiders only have Intelligence 5-7 after all. The exception in the Monstrous Manual is the sword spider, which has average intelligence, but I think it would have trouble using a ballista since it has swords for legs! Of course, there's no reason not to introduce a smarter variety of spider, or one that is especially talented at stringing and firing a projectile weapon.

Although that does give me an idea for an addition to my list of new spiders:

The Archer spider. These toxophilic arachnids use their own fangs, silk and venom to craft bows and poisoned arrows which they can shoot with great skill.

6inTruder

07-07-2009 08:21 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10584185)

*I understand there are stats for other kinds of arachnids in 2nd edition's **The Drow of the Underdark**. Unfortunately, don't have it, but according to wikipedia it has both kinds of whip-scorpion (Schizomida and Uropygi/Thelyphonida), whip-spiders (Amblypyg) and **sun spiders (Solifugid)**.*

That's irony, right?

celebrityomnipath

07-07-2009 09:31 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10581783)

vegetarian ninja spiders (who steal from leaf cutter ants). Though the last one couldn't be in the book since they were described last year.

They better not try that shit with leaf cutter scorpions!

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10584185)

Some good ideas there DMH. I've been thinking about sapient giant spiders keeping livestock, fishing with nets and setting up traps. There are all manner of other things they can do with silk - snares that hoist a victim into the air, alarm-wires, net-covered concealed pits.

They could just sell silk.

MuscaDomestica

07-07-2009 10:29 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10584450)
That's irony, right?

I think they are freaky enough to be brought to the underdark

<http://www.richard-seaman.com/Wallpa.../SunSpider.jpg>

6inTruder

07-07-2009 11:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

haha! Less that and more that their preferred habitat tends towards the desert, and the name I bolded "sun spider" just sounds... Silly for an Underdark creature. And I prefer "wind scorpion" anyway.

otherwise, I love the trapdoor spiders hiding behind dungeon doors! "the door is not *trapped*." indeed.

Sleeper

07-07-2009 12:46 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Pic... too W I D E

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10585193)
haha! Less that and more that their preferred habitat tends towards the desert, and the name I bolded "sun spider" just sounds... Silly for an Underdark creature. And I prefer "wind scorpion" anyway.

Didn't the pseudo-spiders first show up in Q1? I remember the pedipalp and solifugid. Which kind of makes sense with the demonweb. Lolth was raiding, conquering and despoiling dozens of planes. In all those alien worlds, she probably came across a civilization or two of not-quite-spiders.

Us humans, we adore the human form. Look at our art. And look at our monsters. Lovecraft is wrong. The inconceivably alien isn't what humans fear the most. The worst monsters are ourselves... but twisted. Distorted mirror images. Bogeymen, goblins, the undead.

Same with the drow, except their art isn't full of portraits and nudes; it's full of spiders. Arachnea proper. But take that, and warp it? That's just wrong, at least to a dark elf. Monstrous, even. Which is why drow are loathed and despised. Drow get all queasy inside seeing the horrible perversion of their two favorite forms. Same with the false spiders. Just... ick.

Lolth being Lolth, might keep them around primarily to put the fear of goddess in her subjects. When a matron casts a *summons* and gets spiders, she knows she's still in Lolth's good graces. But if all of a sudden she's up to her ears in whip-spiders? Watch out. The Spider Queen is pissed.

The Last Conformist

07-07-2009 05:55 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10585484)

Us humans, we adore the human form. Look at our art. And look at our monsters. Lovecraft is wrong. The inconceivably alien isn't what humans fear the most. The worst monsters are ourselves... but twisted. Distorted mirror images. Bogeymen, goblins, the undead.

It's been suggested (by me if nobody else) that part of the reason Cthulhu is HPL's most famous creation is that it, unlike most of the Mythos heavies, is anthropomorphic enough to be genuinely disturbing.

Sleeper

07-07-2009 06:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by The Last Conformist (Post 10586507)

It's been suggested (by me if nobody else) that part of the reason Cthulhu is HPL's most famous creation is that it, unlike most of the Mythos heavies, is anthropomorphic enough to be genuinely disturbing.

The second most disturbing things are all those animals our ancestors learned to fear. Wolves are our closest competitors, snakes and bugs and squishy things in the sea have poison, and so forth. Lovecraft drew a bit from that, as well.

I always thought that would be a good way to divide the lower planes. Devils are the anthropomorphic scare. They look like humans, except something is wrong. The cute ones have little horns or wings and or a cloven foot or red skin. They're the seducers, the diplomats, the lords and princesses. But there's always something *wrong* that both repels and excites us. The low-level lackey types sheer more towards the terrifying end of the altered-human spectrum; they look a lot like monsters in spooky video games. Shifted faces, extra eyes. Holes in unexpected places, melting skin. Always on fire, or eternally cold. Shuffling, dragging walks. Think death and disfigurement.

Demons on the other hand may have anthropomorphic features, but they're really incarnations of our fear of the things that go bump in the night. They represent the savage wild, nature. Not a twisted mirror image of ourselves (though they're that too, just to a lesser degree than devils). But an image of something we're scared of, magnified. A baboon snarling in rage. A sleek tiger sliding through the shadows. A jellyfish, huge and engulfing. Nightshades and mushrooms, with their subtle poison. Snakes, or to be more precise, vipers. Wasps and hornets and centipedes and spiders and scorpions. Immense crocodiles. Cackling iron-jawed hyenas. Frequently just humanoid enough to add a touch of that scare as well, but not always. Some are just inhuman leviathans. The most humanoid are those that represent what can't be seen: Diseases. Rotting, decaying,

transforming.

JRM

07-07-2009 06:29 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by 6inTruder (Post 10585193)

haha! Less that and more that their preferred habitat tends towards the desert, and the name I bolded "sun spider" just sounds... Silly for an Underdark creature. And I prefer "wind scorpion" anyway.

Well just call them wind scorpions then. I prefer sun spider for Solifugids, since they look more spider-like. No long tail, for a start.

Solifugids tend to stay in their burrows during the day and emerge at night, like desert scorpions. They could be monsters that live in the "entrance levels" of the Underdark, coming to the surface to hunt.

Perhaps that gives a clue as to how the drow use them. When they go on raids against desert folk (sand elves?) they bring whole packs of sun spiders with them, or they just train them to attack non-drow humanoids and release them into the desert sun, when their enemies would not expect an attack from the dark elves.

JRM

07-07-2009 06:40 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10585484)

Didn't the pseudo-spiders first show up in Q1? I remember the pedipalp and solifugid. Which kind of makes sense with the demonweb. Lolth was raiding, conquering and despoiling dozens of planes. In all those alien worlds, she probably came across a civilization or two of not-quite-spiders.

Yup, Q1 being the previously mentioned **Queen of the Demonweb Pits**. I've never quite got around to introducing a civilization of arachnids into any of my games, but came close to it a few times. Well, within about 250,000 miles. I would have liked my players to have met the "Moon Spiders", but never got a chance to get their characters off the planet.

Quote:

Originally Posted by Sleeper (Post 10585484)

Same with the drow, except their art isn't full of portraits and nudes; it's full of spiders. Arachnea proper. But take that, and warp it? That's just wrong, at least to a dark elf. Monstrous, even. Which is why driders are loathed and despised. Drow get all queasy inside seeing the horrible perversion of their two favorite forms. Same with the false spiders. Just... ick.

Having all driders be outcasts from drow society never made much sense to me. Wouldn't it be better to have them view these hybrids like the ancients viewed centaurs, also a joining of their own race with a favoured animal. Most driders fall to the "inferior side" of their two halves and are despised, like the wild centaurs who loved pillage and rapine. A few driders overcame this and manifest the "superior side" of both dark elf and arachnid, become exemplars and teachers like the semi-divine Chiron.

JRM

07-07-2009 06:45 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10584764)
They could just sell silk.

Oh yes, they do that to. The really civilized ones will weave it to order, and run elegant clothing boutiques in certain fantastic settlements.

It takes a brave person to frequent a tailor spider, though. There's always that nagging fear that when she's measuring you for a suit she won't be able to resist the temptation to turn your character into her next meal.

DMH

07-07-2009 08:15 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10584185)
Not sure why they'd bother covering a silk bridge with stones or sticks though.

I'd think ballistae are too complicated for a typical intelligent spider to use though, since they are relatively complicated devices to set up and tune.

If they can make jerky out of their prey for long term storage, then the bridge would allow them to make potentially dozens of kills at the same time. A whole goblin or orc warband would be worth so much more than a few scouts.

I wasn't thinking of an actual ballista, but rather a tension system like the, gah- I don't know spiders well at all. There are some species that have webs that collapse on struggling prey by using high tension. It wouldn't be that difficult for such a spider to use it to throw rocks or even bits of metal (weapons, broken armor). It is on Life in the Undergrowth (but not in the book) and I don't have the time to check it now.

JRM

07-07-2009 09:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10586779)

If they can make jerky out of their prey for long term storage, then the bridge would allow them to make potentially dozens of kills at the same time. A whole goblin or orc warband would be worth so much more than a few scouts.

Speaking of sapient spider food preservation, I've come up with a few ideas about that over the years.

(I'm sure you know the following already DMH, but I'll mention it for those readers who are not invertebrate fans.)

Spiders liquify their food externally and suck up the resulting soup. A lot of spiders can chew food, but they do so outside their mouths, crushing their meal between "toothy" processes at the base of their front legs, fangs or pedipalps.

That leads me to suspect a sapient spider would have trouble eating dried jerky, so they would need other approaches to secure a long-term food supply.

The obvious one is they just cocoon live prey to eat later like some of their non-intelligent cousins do.

Next, they could herd livestock and eat them when they get hungry. Considering there are creatures in D&D with astonishingly efficient metabolisms, they could probably survive just by keeping a few giant beetles as livestock.

However, as for preserved foodstuff the best solution I could come up with is they drain juices out of prey into a container and mix it with preservatives, mainly alcohol, and make "spider soup" or "blood grog". A clever spider wouldn't even need to kill their herd, they could 'tap' them every few weeks and build up a stock of barrels or flasks of the stuff for a lean time.

A particularly civilized variety of spider, such as the aranea, may even become connoisseurs of the stuff, comparing the fine differences between flasks of elf-blood liqueur while the peasant-spiders slug down rum-and-pigblood cocktails.

Heck, I can see some humanoid races even getting a taste for the stuff.

Quote:

Originally Posted by DMH (Post 10586779)

I wasn't thinking of an actual ballista, but rather a tension system like the, gah- I don't know spiders well at all. There are some species that have webs that collapse on struggling prey by using high tension. It wouldn't be that difficult for such a spider to use it to throw rocks or even bits of metal (weapons, broken armor). It is on Life in the Undergrowth (but not in the book) and I don't have the time to check it now.

Oh right, that makes more sense. I have nothing against a monster spider building and operating a cheiroballista, but thought it needed more technical skill and culture than an average AD&D giant spider would be capable of.

Inyssius

07-08-2009 02:17 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Before the lock, I'll take the opportunity to link back to the previous threads...

Part I (A-Gi)

Part II (Gi-Ki)

Part III (Ki-Og)

celebrityomnipath

07-08-2009 05:14 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10586595)

Having all driders be outcasts from drow society never made much sense to me. Wouldn't it be better to have them view these hybrids like the ancients viewed centaurs, also a joining of their own race with a favoured animal. Most driders fall to the "inferior side" of their two halves and are despised, like the wild centaurs who loved pillage and rapine. A few driders overcame this and manifest the "superior side" of both dark elf and arachnid, become exemplars and teachers like the semi-divine Chiron.

Half spiders type creatures are criminally underused in D&D. They should be tailors and exotic dancers. Oh and commandos.

EmperorSeth

07-08-2009 08:09 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10588937)

Half spiders type creatures are criminally underused in D&D. They should be tailors and exotic dancers. Oh and commandos.

Yeah, this last few pages made me wish they went this route with the core 4e races instead of the stupid dragonborn.

As for why the drow are repulsed by driders and why we are bothered by how some devils are a little "off," the oft-used uncanny valley popped into my head. It begs an unpleasant question, though: what are the drow/spiders that the drow think were done "right" like?

celebrityomnipath

07-08-2009 08:49 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10589654)

Yeah, this last few pages made me wish they went this route with the core 4e races instead of the stupid dragonborn.

Oh I don't mind teh dragonborn, they're iconic ain't they. I mean it is called *Dungeons & Dragons*, not *Dungeons & Fuck Off Big Spiders*.

Though *Dungeons & Fuck Off Big Spiders* would be a better game.

Sleeper

07-08-2009 12:03 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by EmperorSeth (Post 10589654)

It begs an unpleasant question, though: what are the drow/spiders that the drow think were done "right" like?

One of Lolth's forms is a big spider with an elven head.

demiurge1138

07-08-2009 01:07 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Yeah. If Lolth is any indication, it's giving a spider a humanoid torso that sets off the uncanny valley for drow.

Belchion

07-08-2009 05:13 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10586603)

Oh yes, they do that to. The really civilized ones will weave it to order, and run elegant clothing boutiques in certain fantastic settlements.

In the computer game Dark Sun: Shattered Lands, there was a tribe of sentient spiders which had a civil war about whether they should treat humans as prey (and eat them) or as equals (and trade silk for tools and food).

Sleeper

07-08-2009 05:22 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 10591572)

In the computer game Dark Sun: Shattered Lands, there was a tribe of sentient spiders which had a civil war about whether they should treat humans as prey (and eat them) or as equals (and trade silk for tools and food).

The obvious answer is social engineering. Engineer a class war, wait until it settles out. Send a trade delegation to the Haves, start a profitable export business with raw silk and finished goods. Attend social galas, create absolutely *fabulous* gowns, worm into high society. Use this position to reinforce the Haves' belief that they are innately, naturally, genetically superior to the Have Nots. Support periodicals and demagogues preaching that the Have Nots are no better than cattle. And then, once the meme is widespread, purchase hunting rights in the Have Nots ghetto from the Haves, and viola! Trade *and* food, high fashion *and* wicked oppression!

sim_james

07-08-2009 08:52 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

I played a spider-centaur in Rolemaster... and when I drew a picture of what the infants of my race looked like, *that* triggered folks' uncanny valley like you wouldn't believe.

DMH

07-08-2009 08:53 PM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10587025)

That leads me to suspect a sapient spider would have trouble eating dried jerky, so they would need other approaches to secure a long-term food supply.

Just add water and spit. Jerky of the whole humanoid kind would be difficult to transport (unless spiders are superstrong like Spiderman) but easy to keep underground for a very long time. Mummified corpses hundreds of years old still have all that meat- it just has to be wetted and liquidified first. Some buried drow or duergar cities may have intelligent spider populations that can last for centuries (as long as they keep their numbers in check).

JRM

07-09-2009 01:32 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by demiurge1138 (Post 10590844)

Yeah. If Lolth is any indication, it's giving a spider a humanoid torso that sets off the uncanny valley for drow.

Or they could think spider-Lolth is just as freaky-looking as a drider, but just don't mention it.

After all, would **you** want the Spider Queen hearing about it?

JRM

07-09-2009 01:51 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10588937)

Half spiders type creatures are criminally underused in D&D. They should be tailors and exotic dancers. Oh and commandos.

Half-spiders may be agile but they're not lissome enough to be successful exotic dancers in humanoid society (unless they're dealing with a very specialised clientele).

They're great tap-dancers though.

Speaking of half-spiders and other humanoid-arachnoid hybrid, what is your favourite body type for them:

The 'Spider-Centaur' - The human from the waist up, spider from the waist down.

The 'Ettercap' - Furry humanoid with bug eyes and fangs.

The 'Aranea' - Hands on its pedipalps and maybe a human face.

The 'Chagmat' - Fully upright like a man but decidedly inhuman - 6 arms, 2 legs and the fanged head of a spider. (This beastie comes from **Dragon #63** if you're interested)

Looks like we need something between the Ettercap and the Chagmat, with 4 arms and 4 legs. Could call it an "Arachnaman" or something similarly corny.

JRM

07-09-2009 03:38 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

After flicking through the Chagmat adventure back in Dragon #63 I was inspired to check for other references spiders in Dragon Magazine and came up with a couple of interesting articles.

First off, Dragon #67 (November 1982) has **Souping Up The Spider** by Gregg Chamberlain. Not a bad article, although it has a few errors in taxonomy.

As well as an introduction to spider anatomy the article has stats for three kinds of "Weaver Spiders" and eight "Hunter Spiders":

Weaving Spiders

"Barrel spider" (Not sure what kind of spider this is supposed to represent)

"Boleadore spider"

"Net-throwing and Fishing spider" (things like the Ogre-Faced Spider *Deinopidae*)

Hunting Spiders

"Crab Spider"

"Daddy-Longlegs" (actually not a spider, since it's an *Opiliones* harvestman not a long-legged type of spider like the *Pholcidae*)

Jumping Spider

Raft or Swamp spider (e.g. *Dolomedes*)

Spitting spider"

"Trap-door or Purse spider" (Covers a range of families)

"Whip spider" (As mentioned earlier in the thread, *Amblypygi* may be arachnids but they are *not* spiders. Oh, and 1st edition already had stats for these ever since Queen of the Demonweb Pits was released two years earlier than this magazine)

"Wolf spider" (Strictly speaking *Lycosidae*, although the stats would also serve for similar species from other families.)

That's a pretty good selection, with most of the major varieties cover. I would like to know what a "barrel spider" is, so I'll do some googling to find out. One thing I should note is the article forgot to discuss spider venom, including no mention that the daddy long leg and whip spider arachnids do not have poison.

The second article is *The Dragon's Bestiary* from issue #118 (February 1987). Unlike the former, this has some more unrealistic entries among its spiders and spiderlike creatures.

"Opilionid (Cave Harvestman)" (This is a subterranean take on the "Daddy Long Legs" in the previous article.)

"Spider Cat" (This is basically a cross between a lion and a giant spider. It has poison fangs, claws, spins webs, is immune to fear & illusions and has 30% magic resistance. Oh, and you need +2 magic weapons to hurt it. "Spider cats are the creations of a mad wizard, millenia dead". What would we do without mad wizards, eh.)

"Phoenix Spider" (Basically a big black widow with reverse colour - i.e. red all over with a black hourglass - that is reborn each time you kill it, getting stronger each time, until you run through all its lives. I've never much cared for this kind of Russian Doll monster, the only time I used something like this each incarnation had a *different* monsters inside it)

"Polar Spider" Not very interesting, an big spider that's immune to cold.

"Bolas Spider, Giant" Another take on the previous article's "Boleadore Spider" This one can *detect magic* by touch and collects enchanted objects, for no known reason.

Not so taken by this lot, although I liked the idea of Spider Cats.

Oh and yes, spider-lions do hunt in packs. :D

celebrityomnipath

07-09-2009 06:34 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by Belchion (Post 10591572)

In the computer game Dark Sun: Shattered Lands, there was a tribe of sentient spiders which had a civil war about whether they should treat humans as prey (and eat them) or as equals (and trade silk for tools and food).

Yeah one faction thought "we should eat people, that will make us popular and well-respected" and the other

one thought "no let's talk to people and trade with them and be nice and shit, that will make us popular". Of course, being Dark Sun, teh first faction were right. It's Dark Sun, everyone loves a cannibal.

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10593100)

Half-spiders may be agile but they're not lissome enough to be successful exotic dancers in humanoid society (unless they're dealing with a very specialised clientele).

Ah I think they'll be a market for spider porn in D&D world.

Thinking of which:

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10593100)

Looks like we need something between the Ettercap and the Chagmat, with 4 arms and 4 legs. Could call it an "Arachnaman" or something similarly corny.

Teh word "Ettercap" causes me to twinge evar since I saw an erotic drawing of one.

JRM

07-09-2009 07:47 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10594287)

Ah I think they'll be a market for spider porn in D&D world.

I believe that falls under the "very specialised clientele" category I mentioned.:o

noisms

07-09-2009 09:23 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by JRM (Post 10593100)

Half-spiders may be agile but they're not lissome enough to be successful exotic dancers in humanoid society (unless they're dealing with a very specialised clientele).

They're great tap-dancers though.

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*The 'Chagmat' - Fully upright like a man but decidedly inhuman - 6 arms, 2 legs and the fanged head of a spider. (This beastie comes from **Dragon #63** if you're interested)*

Looks like we need something between the Ettercap and the Chagmat, with 4 arms and 4 legs. Could call it an "Arachnaman" or something similarly corny.

I'm a fan of the Ettercap type, but mostly because I just love Ettercaps.

The Aranea is easily the creepiest, and has the advantage of being one of the nastiest monsters you can meet in the roguelike games I enjoy.

Ragnarok_Engine

07-09-2009 10:27 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by celebrityomnipath (Post 10589814)

Oh I don't mind teh dragonborn, they're iconic ain't they. I mean it is called Dungeons & Dragons, not Dungeons & Fuck Off Big Spiders.

Though Dungeons & Fuck Off Big Spiders would be a better game.

I think we have SteveD's next project lined up for him once WFRP work dries up! He's even in the perfect location to do research!

noisms

07-09-2009 11:11 AM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part IV, Orc~?]

New thread [here](#).

noisms

[Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~?]

[Contd. from [here](#).]

The last leg of our mystical and wondrous journey? Perhaps. I'm going to miss these threads. :(

Sprite

Sprites - the easy going, pleasure loving, gossamer-winged, goody-goody fairies that we all know and, er, love[?]. I daresay you know the deal: they dislike evil, and will attempt to drug and then either kill or remove unwanted trespassers in their glades. We're also told they dislike "ugliness", which seems a bit harsh - then again in the un-PC world of D&D, ugliness is generally a fair indication of evil, so you can't blame the Sprites for using it as a yardstick.

A number of varieties are listed:

Sprite (Standard)

Sprites possess many of the abilities that can make a monster extremely annoying - invisibility at will, sleeping-potion-darts, and a willingness to attack on sight if they find you unattractive. But of course, they can also fit into that "other" rarely-played variety of D&D - the more mysterious, fairy-tale-esque variety which is perfectly possible with the system as it is. In such a game Sprites could be responsible for all manner of strange goings on in the forest, with the PCs investigating, perhaps.

Sea Sprites

These Sprites live in coral reefs, and are a little like environmental avengers, killing those who damage the reefs but leaving other trespassers alive on nearby beaches. They are the sworn enemies of Sahuagin - as everybody in the ocean seems to be.

Pixie

Pixies possess are like Sprites writ large - with huge potential to be annoying and huge potential to be mysterious, depending on the DM. Not only can they put you to sleep, they can also make you lose your memory, make you dance irresistibly, use ESP, polymorph themselves...essentially, they possess the entire arsenal of the tricky D&D creature.

The MM describes Pixie behaviour as being somewhere between a Knocker (making noises in the night) and a kind of moral policeman, tricking misers out of gold and generally pricking the noses of the self-important. People who come searching for Pixie treasure are mercilessly hounded, but if they can show a good sense of humour they might be rewarded.

Nixie

An underwater Pixie, which can charm human trespassers and enslave them, which I rather like - it's nice to have capricious and somewhat sinister fairie folk about.

Nixie society has a surprising level of detail:

Quote:

Nixie tribes are ruled by the Acquar (water mother), a hereditary position held by a direct descendant of the original founding ancestor. She decides major disputes and chooses the most apt warrior to be the S'oquar, the warlord responsible for hunting and defense. The Acquar is advised by a council of elders, whose spokesperson is called the L'uquar, the keeper of the tribe's oral history. Treasures, whether the spoils of war or the results of work or luck, are divided equally by the Acquar. Intertribal rivalries are often fierce, and females are sometimes kidnapped as brides, for nixies are polygamists, keeping 2-3 wives. Nixies worship water and nature powers.

There's so much information in the MM that it's a little depressing sometimes. I'll probably never use a Nixie tribe in one of my games, simply from want of time. Sad, isn't it?

Atomie

This is the smallest Sprite of all. As well as the usual Sprite powers it can also summon insects.

Atomies live in treetop villages that are a little like those of the Ewoks. They sometimes grow mushroom pets, and take care of lost children. To be honest, I find them the least interesting Sprite variety, although there is potential in the idea of their tendency to hoard magical items. What if they get their hands on something the

PCs need? etc.

Grig

Another variety of trick-players, with long cricket legs and a greater tendency towards violence. Amusingly, we are told they speak "atomie, brownie, pixie, sprite, and Common" - more candidates for the Elven Cat list of lesser-known languages!

07-09-2009, 11:13 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

-

For the curious, here are the first three parts of this thread:

Part I (A-Gi)

Part II (Gi-Ki)

Part III (Ki-Og)

07-09-2009, 11:17 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

For the curious, here are the first three parts of this thread:

Part I (A-Gi)

Part II (Gi-Ki)

Part III (Ki-Og)

Thanks, Inyssius.

07-09-2009, 12:13 PM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

A number of varieties are listed:

Sprite (Standard)

Somehow, I'm now envisioning *Sprite (Diet)* and *Sprite (Lemon-Lime)* as well.

I'm torn on the Nixie titles, though. "Acquar", "S'oquar", and "L'uquar" are all kinda nice for having that obvious element in common. On the other hand, they're afflicted with the Meaningless Fantasy Name Apostrophe, and so should probably be purged with fire...

07-09-2009, 12:26 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

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Whaq iq wrong witq 'qa qon'sistent letquer anq quae ocquasional a'pos'tro'qhe?

Oh. That.

07-09-2009, 01:03 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Somehow, I'm now envisioning *Sprite (Diet)* and *Sprite (Lemon-Lime)* as well.

Sprite (Throwback)?

07-09-2009, 01:16 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Somehow, I'm now envisioning *Sprite (Diet)* and *Sprite (Lemon-Lime)* as well.

I'm torn on the Nixie titles, though. "Acquar", "S'oquar", and "L'uquar" are all kinda nice for having that obvious element in common. On the other hand, they're afflicted with the Meaningless Fantasy Name Apostrophe, and so should probably be purged with fire...

I'm currently working my way through The Malazan Book of the Fallen, which is possibly the most egregious example of the abuse of apostrophes in the fantasy literature canon. It seriously mars an otherwise enjoyable experience.

07-09-2009, 03:30 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Somehow, I'm now envisioning *Sprite (Diet)* and *Sprite (Lemon-Lime)* as well.

Oh, those were the days. Back when I did a silly dungeon crawl game, the PCs found the pantry of the legendary kobold sorcerer Kojark. In it were cans of Sprite.

Oh, how they screamed when they were opened...

07-09-2009, 06:50 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Sprite

Sprites - the easy going, pleasure loving, gossamer-winged, goody-goody fairies that we all know and, er, love[?]. I daresay you know the deal: they dislike evil, and will attempt to drug and then either kill or remove unwanted trespassers in their glades. We're also told they dislike "ugliness", which seems a bit harsh - then again in the un-PC world of D&D, ugliness is generally a fair indication of evil, so you can't blame the Sprites for using it as a yardstick.

Well they may claim to be all good-goody butter-won't-melt-in-my-mouth but their stat entries say differently. See for yourself:

Sprite - Neutral (good)

Sea Spirite - Chaotic Neutral

Pixie - Neutral

Nixie- Neutral

Atomie - Chaotic Neutral

Grig - Neutral (good)

So, at best two out of six varieties have Good tendencies, while another two are strongly Chaotic.

I think these creatures work best as amoral trickster-types, not evil *per se*, but you want to tread carefully about them. Not only are they bored and mischievous, but they never forget a slight and can be endlessly inventive [S]if[/S] when they want to be vindictive.

Also, I think you missed a trick by not mentioning this titbit from the Pixie entry:

Quote:

The most famous by-product of pixies is pixie dust, also known as *dust of disappearance*. Crushing 50 pixie wings into a fine powder creates one dose of *dust of disappearance*. Naturally, pixies frown on this use of their wings.

Doesn't that just scream "adventure seed"?

The pixies played their pranks on the wrong guy, a Lawful Evil wizard and her adventuring party who have access to copious *detect invisibility* spells and absolutely no sense of humour. The party proceeds to track them down and trap them in little iron cages, to harvest their wings for pixie dust and let them regrow. Then an escapee wingless pixie tries to recruit the player characters to rescue them.

For some reason I fancy giving the evil wizard a Lawful Evil pseudodragon as a familiar. Maybe he or she used to be CG but put on a *helm of opposite alignment*.

Hmm, maybe the pixies knew the wizard before they were evilized, so thought it was safe to play japes of him or her. Now I'm spinning off a alternative plot were the helm becomes a "crown of evil" (created by an covey of

hags who hate the pixies?), and if the player's manage to destroy this magic item the wizard reverts to their original niceness.

07-09-2009, 11:04 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have the Spiderwick art book and it shows how much better he has become with such critters.

As for sprites themselves, they never made it into 2e, did they? (I mean true sprites, not the sprite fey subtype)

07-10-2009, 04:48 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Anyone ever played Castle Falkenstein? That had lots of these little shifts. We had a simple solution; butterfly nets. Strung with piano wire.

07-10-2009, 05:12 AM

lthaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I have the Spiderwick art book and it shows how much better he has become with such critters.

It's got a whole lot of awesome art; I particularly liked the merrows and the najads, for some reason.

A former campaign had sprites and pixies and whatnots in fairly important supporting roles at lower levels. Our DM was very good at playing them as annoyingly cheery, scatterbrained and curious little critters that got us seriously consider investing in a spell to swat them down... and then sprung some soulless, mutilated sprites with pulled wings and sewed-shut mouths on us. The sudden rush of sympathy for the little critters was astonishing.

07-10-2009, 09:45 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

It's got a whole lot of awesome art; I particularly liked the merrows and the najads, for some reason.

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Who had done the terrible crime, and were they brought to justice? You can't leave us hanging like that!

07-10-2009, 11:23 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

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That's not fair, though. DiTerlizzi makes anything better.

07-10-2009, 02:33 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Who had done the terrible crime, and were they brought to justice? You can't leave us hanging like that!

The ruler of a decaying pocket plane, whose agents were stealing sprite souls to invigorate his realm. And yeah, he got his just deserts... unfortunately, and *completely unintentionally*, in the process of us thrashing him, we managed to depopulate the entire plane by accidentally setting every faction against one another! (Not one of our characters' finest moments, although the players remember it with great amusement.)

Though at least the giant magical tree, where the forests of the plane had taken refuge, survived and the forests started to spread out again.

07-10-2009, 07:13 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

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As for sprites themselves, they never made it into 2e, did they? (I mean true sprites, not the sprite fey subtype)

I'm guessing from the "Fey subtype" you meant Third edition, not Second, since 2nd edition has true sprites as the first entry in the Monstrous Manual's "Sprite" entry.

As for 3rd edition, I don't think wizards ever released official stats for true sprites. There's probably a version in some third-party product or other like The Tome of Horrors, but I can't recall seeing them in any 3E book I own.

07-10-2009, 08:52 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

SNIP

Dragon #67 (November 1982) has ***Souping Up The Spider*** by Gregg Chamberlain. Not a bad article, although it has a few errors in taxonomy.

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"Boleadore spider"

"Net-throwing and Fishing spider" (things like the Ogre-Faced Spider **Deinopidae**)

SNIP

That's a pretty good selection, with most of the major varieties cover. I would like to know what a "barrel spider" is, so I'll do some googling to find out.

Well, after some googling to try to find out what Mr Chamberlain meant by a "barrel spider" I came up with two possibilities: Both Jumping spiders of the *Thiodina* genus and Solifugids (aka sun spider or wind spider) have been called by the name. It looks like sun spiders are the better fit, since (a) they match the description more closely (see below); and (b) the article has an entry for Jumping Spiders, so having one for *Thiodina* seems redundant.

Although, that would give the article another non-spider venomless arachnid masquerading as a true spider. More confusingly, it's listed under "Weaver Spiders", which argues against it being a wind-spider. Solifugids don't spin webs!

Can anyone come up with a better alternative? DMH?

Here's the description the article gives for a "barrel spider", it certainly sounds more like a solifugid than a web-spinning spider:

Quote:

This spider's pedipalps are greatly extended so they sometimes act as an extra pair of legs. The body is covered with a pale yellow film of hairs, making the spider especially sensitive to changes in air pressure and thus very difficult to surprise (roll of 1 on d8). The chelicerae are very strong; the garden variety (normal spider-sized) can crack a beetle's armor.

SNIP

When cornered, this spider hisses, though she does not spit poison. Treat this attack as for a bombardier beetle,...

07-10-2009, 09:19 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The only spider I can think of with palps almost as large as legs are the really primitive ones with abdomen segmentation. *Liphistius* looks like it has 10 legs. But it isn't a weaver, so I have no idea what the author was getting at either.

07-10-2009, 10:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The only spider I can think of with palps almost as large as legs are the really primitive ones with abdomen segmentation. *Liphistius* looks like it has 10 legs. But it isn't a weaver, so I have no idea what the author was getting at either.

Yes, I did wonder whether it could be some kind of primitive spider, although I was thinking of Mygalomorphs, since there are species of "bird-eating-spider" that are sometimes called "hissing spiders", and it mentions hissing.

I didn't consider the even-more-primitive Mesothelae like *Liphistius*. If the article said whether are venomous or not it would help narrow it down, but it would have been even better to have mentioned their actual taxonomic name!

Still, a sun spider / wind spider seems the best match. Some of the primitive spiders may have the long palps, powerful jaws and "hissing" given in the description, but they don't usually have pale yellow fur, which is a common attribute for Solifugids.

07-11-2009, 08:10 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Getting back to sprites. They seem fairly weak with all the monstrous spiders and other critters that can kill/eat them without too much effort. How do they survive? Do they ally with any good monsters?

07-11-2009, 09:05 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Getting back to sprites. They seem fairly weak with all the monstrous spiders and other critters that can kill/eat them without too much effort. How do they survive? Do they ally with any good monsters?

Invisibility is I suppose the key to this.

It's also not difficult to imagine the sprites having some sort of symbiotic relationship with animal species. You know like how animals form coincidental partnerships, so that a rock guppy will presume to live in the hole a shrimp has made, "in return" for warning the shrimp when a predator is about?

Sprites might do something similar, like for example providing nectar for a species of wasp which hunts spiders. That's maybe a crap example because carnivorous wasps aren't likely to drink nectar, but you get the idea.

07-12-2009, 01:11 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

The most famous by-product of pixies is pixie dust, also known as *dust of disappearance*. Crushing 50 pixie wings into a fine powder creates one dose of *dust of disappearance*. Naturally, pixies frown on this use of their wings.

Hrm. If pixies shed their wings annually (not too unlikely a scenario), then they are all but certain to have cornered the market on *dust of disappearance*.

In fact, that could be a good way to recast pixies: as tiny drug pushers, willing to give the first hit of *dust* cheap, but then scaling up the prices as addict adventurers keep coming back for more...

07-12-2009, 01:43 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Hrm. If pixies shed their wings annually (not too unlikely a scenario), then they are all but certain to have cornered the market on *dust of disappearance*.

In fact, that could be a good way to recast pixies: as tiny drug pushers, willing to give the first hit of *dust* cheap, but then scaling up the prices as addict adventurers keep coming back for more...

I like that. A dash of gritty urban fantasy tossed into the already odd blend that's D&D.

Perhaps the pixie lecturer at the local druids' school has contracted an incurable magical ailment. To make money to support his family he teams up with an ex-student (ogre?) of his who dropped out and became involved in the dust trade. The pixie is using his extensive knowledge of alchemy to make the purest *dust of disappearance* the Dweomer Enforcement Agency has ever found. Known as the "blue dust", it's popping up across five kingdoms. Rumors of a new player in the dust trade abound, going by the pseudonym "Mr. Occam". :)

07-12-2009, 10:24 AM

Kathel

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I like that. A dash of gritty urban fantasy tossed into the already odd blend that's D&D.

Perhaps the pixie lecturer at the local druids' school has contracted an incurable magical ailment. To make money to support his family he teams up with an ex-student (ogre?) of his who dropped out and became involved in the dust trade. The pixie is using his extensive knowledge of alchemy to make the purest *dust of disappearance* the Dweomer Enforcement Agency has ever found. Known as the "blue dust", it's popping up across five kingdoms. Rumors of a new player in the dust trade abound, going by the pseudonym "Mr. Occam". :)

Pure awesome. Pure awesome! This is a fantastic idea for the start of a campaign. *goes looking for his 2e books*

07-12-2009, 11:27 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kathel**

Pure awesome. Pure awesome! This is a fantastic idea for the start of a campaign. *goes looking for his 2e books*

Somebody will eventually point out where I stole the idea from :)

07-12-2009, 12:43 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Squid, Giant

You have to love creatures like the Giant Squid - from the ancient stories of the Kraken through to Cthulu and the Watcher in the Water, gargantuan cephalopods have been a feature of the fantastic. And there's definitely a kind of primal human terror of the many-tentacled, relentless carnivore which seeps through into even D&D.

Giant Squid

The 'ordinary' variety, 60' long, capable of dragging small boats to the bottom of the ocean or slowing and/or crushing larger ones. (Incidentally the rules for squid attacks on ships are pretty good: 2e could be very quick and easy with things like that when it wanted to be.) Unusually it has only an intelligence of 0, which is hardly fair when we consider how clever PETA girl made the D&D dolphin and also hardly realistic from what we know of cephalopod intelligence. It also has a 'swim' movement of only 3 (though can 'Jet' at 18) which is surely a misprint.

Nevertheless you don't get much better than a struggle against a Giant Squid, complete with severed tentacles and ink clouds. I'm sure you'll agree.

Kraken

The Kraken is 90' or more long and practically demi-god like in power, with their abilities to control the weather and summon sea monsters to their aid.

Indeed, I like to think of Kraken as actual demigods of a sort, perhaps worshipped by Sahuagin or other evil races of the deep. I once thought up a scenario where a Kraken had, over millenia, slowly corrupted a nearby community of Sea Elves and turned them into its servants; they ranged far and wide, abducting unsuspecting humanoids to take back to the sea floor for sacrifice. But I never ended up using it.

Of course, the MM has a fun little scenario itself, where it is said that Kraken maintain huge tunnel complexes beneath the sea bed, in which they keep many human slaves. Clearly a rescue job for a band of intrepid adventurers.

07-12-2009, 03:20 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The Kraken is 90' or more long and practically demi-god like in power, with their abilities to control the weather and summon sea monsters to their aid.

What if the ability to control the weather is only the surface of a kraken's powers, both literally and figuratively? D&D is rather lacking in water spells. Raise, lower, breathe; that's about it. There isn't a watery equivalent of weather control, of calling lightning, of precipitation, of faerie fire. That's the reason they're lacking in powers suited to their benthic environment. To actually define their powers over water would require an entire tome full of watery magics, and that was just too much work for a single entry in the MM.

Controlling the moisture in the air is merely the most distant, evanescent manifestation of their powers. Because the krakens are kind of like spiders of the deep. They spin their web, using ancient rituals that can only be performed by a being with ten arms. They draw sigils, miles wide and create a roiling batch of water, and then direct it. Running up and down the coast, under the sea, ten such vast underwater rivers become almost living extensions of their limbs. Krakens are the source of all currents. Where the seas brings warm water to northerly coasts, there is a kraken. They forge the great roads that criss-cross the oceans.

Their ability to control the weather is almost an afterthought. They reach up frail and ephemeral little currents of airborne water, and nudge here, tweak there. It's so attenuated that it requires great skill, but it is merely a shadow of their underwater power. Because when they're angry, that can slap their tentacles and their currents jump in response. Ships crash against reefs. Sailors are sucked under. Whole pods of whales are cast a hundred miles in a matter of minutes by an undersea surge.

Because, like arms, the currents are sensitive. Ships on the skin, on the upper surface... tickle. Irritate. Annoy. And every once in a while, the kraken just has to lash out. Scratch. Rub. Stop the tingling, at least for a little while. This is why they crush ships, and haunt sea lanes. Because all those trade routes that connect all those ports scattered like flotsam across the ocean's distant shores? They run along the tops of their arms.

07-12-2009, 04:14 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Of course, the MM has a fun little scenario itself, where it is said that Kraken maintain huge tunnel complexes beneath the sea bed, in which they keep many human slaves. Clearly a rescue job for a band of intrepid adventurers.

And that's why kraken and morkoth get along. Who do you think digs those giant complexes? Morkoth act as kraken's subcontractors, digging out massive underground complexes in exchange for a section of the burrow to call their own and convert into a hypno-tunnel and a steady supply of slaves to torture and eat. Perhaps the kraken keeps the relationship alive by employing the morkoth as a torturer and jailer, keeping the slaves in line with threats of being morkified?

07-12-2009, 05:56 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Getting back to sprites. They seem fairly weak with all the monstrous spiders and other critters that can kill/eat them without too much effort. How do they survive? Do they ally with any good monsters?

They have invisibility, sleep arrows and can fly, all pretty good defenses. Plus, they do pal around with other sylvan creatures, the monster manual says so.

Its all very well nice casting a *see invisible* spell and going a-pixie hunting until their friend the treant turns up.

That raises the question what role sprites play in fey society-ecology. Perhaps they are *pollinators*? That would cast an entirely different light on their close relationship with treants and dryads...

07-12-2009, 05:58 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Controlling the moisture in the air is merely the most distant, evanescent manifestation of their powers. Because the krakens are kind of like spiders of the deep. They spin their web, using ancient rituals that can only be performed by a being with ten arms. They draw sigils, miles wide and create a roiling batch of water, and then direct it. Running up and down the coast, under the sea, ten such vast underwater rivers become almost living extensions of their limbs. Krakens are the source of all currents. Where the seas brings warm water to northerly coasts, there is a kraken. They forge the great roads that criss-cross the oceans.

SNIP

I like that idea, it ties in nicely with exaggerated real-world myths of kraken and sea-serpents many leagues long. They are just confused references to the magical current-tentacles of the god-squids.

07-12-2009, 09:05 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

They have invisibility, sleep arrows and can fly, all pretty good defenses. Plus, they do pal around with other sylvan creatures, the monster manual says so.

This is why I hate creatures that share a name with a type. I meant all the fey in the sprite entry. They are all weaklings (even fiddler grigs) compared with the evil monsters that corrupt forests. Unicorns aren't that much better. Treants are too slow.

So who, other than adventurers, is the real protector of sylvan areas?

07-12-2009, 09:35 PM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Of course, the MM has a fun little scenario itself, where it is said that Kraken maintain huge tunnel complexes beneath the sea bed, in which they keep many human slaves. Clearly a rescue job for a band of intrepid adventurers.

No one could ever explain to me why undersea caves would be full of lovely breatheable air. Well, not without using the word "magic" anyway:.)

07-12-2009, 09:59 PM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

They are all weaklings... So who, other than adventurers, is the real protector of sylvan areas?

You try calling a 10th level fighter/magic user/thief sylvan elf "weakling" and see what happens. :D

07-13-2009, 12:32 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

This is why I hate creatures that share a name with a type. I meant all the fey in the sprite entry. They are all weaklings (even fiddler grigs) compared with the evil monsters that corrupt forests. Unicorns aren't that much better. Treants are too slow.

So who, other than adventurers, is the real protector of sylvan areas?

Nymphs. Imagine the sheer devastation one nude nymph could wreak upon an unsuspecting orcish army. 80% of the orcs who see her die.

07-13-2009, 09:59 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

No one could ever explain to me why undersea caves would be full of lovely breathable air. Well, not without using the word "magic" anyway.:)

Well yeah, magic. I think we're supposed to imagine the Kraken using its special "make breathable space in water" ability.

07-13-2009, 11:20 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Nymphs. Imagine the sheer devastation one nude nymph could wreak upon an unsuspecting orcish army. 80% of the orcs who see her die.

That suggests a rather different twist on the nymph concept. Hardened battle-weary soldiers trying to keep it together, disgusted with themselves for what they have to do to defeat the enemy.

07-13-2009, 08:18 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

That raises the question what role sprites play in fey society-ecology. Perhaps they are *pollinators*? That would cast an entirely different light on their close relationship with treants and dryads...

Also, how do they reproduce. Are there larval sprites or do they spontaneously generate?

07-13-2009, 11:14 PM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That suggests a rather different twist on the nymph concept. Hardened battle-weary soldiers trying to keep it together, disgusted with themselves for what they have to do to defeat the enemy.

Yet another origin for half-orcs that probably wouldn't pass muster for 4e...

07-14-2009, 02:50 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That suggests a rather different twist on the nymph concept. Hardened battle-weary soldiers trying to keep it together, disgusted with themselves for what they have to do to defeat the enemy.

Depending upon how you play your faerie creatures, they may or may not give a fuck. Or even notice: "Those mortal creatures are so short lived, they just keep dropping dead." "Yeah I know, only the other day I saw a whole lot of them and most of them just collapsed and died right there, they must have such short lifespans."

There is a half-nymph-half-elf race in *Bastards And Bloodlines**, called houri. They have +8 to charisma, are all female, and can use Dazzling Beauty once per day (The back of that book is packed with feats to enhance natural abilities and make them work more frequently, btw). Sadly they lack a feat or prestige class that lets them kill people by looking at them.

They also look like those amazingly unrealistic pictures of hot chicks, obviously drawn by men, that you see in fantasy books and of heavy metal album covers. And they seem to spend 90% of their waking moments being stalked by bards looking for muses.

Houri are fucking awesome, but sadly they are usually druids, rather than bards. Well I say "bards" but really they should all be employed to dress up in leather armour and stand with a half-ogre in spikey armour on either side of them and pose for heavy metal album covers.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Yet another origin for half-orcs that probably wouldn't pass muster for 4e...

Well, according to Green Ronin's *Bastards And Bloodlines**, nymphs can only breed with elves, then again they also say that elves can breed with bugbears, so what do they know? In their defense however, Green Ronin also invented that awesome creature; the anathema nymph, which are undead nymphs that result when orcs burn down their forest and take a big shit in their sacred pond.

Evil undead nymphs still have their being so beautiful that they can kill or maim people with their beauty related powers, despite being undead (I guess everyone is a necro-romancer when it comes to them) and they can also turn elves like clerics turn undead and, thinking of undead, they can make evil zombie elves which is hillaryarse.

They may be the most awesome nymphs ever!!!!!!eleven etc.

*I had forgotten how awesome that book is until now.

07-14-2009, 08:50 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

So who, other than adventurers, is the real protector of sylvan areas?

While Druids are a common explanation, how about Green Dragons? Nothing says the protector has to be Good, and you're messing with their forest.

07-14-2009, 08:53 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Also, how do they reproduce. Are there larval sprites or do they spontaneously generate?

Well their MM entry says they come in male and female, and they're humanoid, so it seems likely they use the traditional humanoid method of procreation.

07-14-2009, 09:00 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Well, according to Green Ronin's *Bastards And Bloodlines**, nymphs can only breed with elves, then again they also say that elves can breed with bugbears, so what do they know?

Hmm, well if you combine the Tolkienish "orcs are corrupted elves" trope with the 1E Monster Manual's comment that orcs will breed with anything, that rather suggests elves will breed with anything, too. They could be the AD&D's cross-species hybridizing equivalent of dragons under 3rd edition.

Which raises a rather disturbing possibility as to how the Elven Cat, the Cooshee (Elven Dog) and other elven animals* are really brought into existence.:eek:

*I imagine there are elven horses & hawks, at least.

07-14-2009, 09:12 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, well if you combine the Tolkienish "orcs are corrupted elves" trope with the 1E Monster Manual's comment that orcs will breed with anything, that rather suggests elves will breed with anything, too. They could be the AD&D's cross-species hybridizing equivalent of dragons under 3rd edition.

I'll keep this short cause we ain't on teh elf or orc thread anymore.

Well once again according to Green Ronin, orcs can breed with owlbears but not with elves, cause orcs are corrupted elves and magic or something. I really liked that book but I do not consider it to be a biology textbook.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Which raises a rather disturbing possibility as to how the Elven Cat, the Cooshee (Elven Dog) and other elven animals* are really brought into existence.:eek:

*I imagine there are elven horses & hawks, at least.

Na that's halflings. Seriously, blink dogs? Oh and harpies.

07-14-2009, 09:43 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Well once again according to Green Ronin, orcs can breed with owlbears but not with elves

I don't know about owlbears (and would frankly rather not), but the idea that elves and orcs can't interbreed is at least from this very Monstrous Manual, and possibly older: "orcs will crossbreed with virtually every humanoid and demihuman species except elves, with whom they cannot."

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That suggests a rather different twist on the nymph concept. Hardened battle-weary soldiers trying to keep it together, disgusted with themselves for what they have to do to defeat the enemy.

I'm actually picturing a variant on Monty Python's "Funniest Joke in the World."

In other news, Satyrs could make pretty competent forest protectors - they're as common as elves, and have an extra 4 hit dice. In fact, the forests could be kind of like a Valhalla - the satyrs fight all day, every day, and spend their nights frolicking and chasing attractive women.

Perhaps those who die by the sight of a nymph are blessed to rise again as one of the forests protectors - the satyr. They will enjoy a life of eternal pleasure and decadence, mixed with spurts of maddening warfare.

07-14-2009, 03:09 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Yet another origin for half-orcs that probably wouldn't pass muster for 4e...

I was a bit ambiguous, but I was actually referring to the psychological ramifications of killing.

Separately, there really does seem to be a missing UberFey. There's the LeShay in 3E, but dual-wielding lightsabre elves don't quite fit the traditional role. I like using hags or adapting vila or rusalka, but then I'm a fan of Russian folklore.

07-14-2009, 03:55 PM

JohnBiles

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Perhaps those who die by the sight of a nymph are blessed to rise again as one of the forests protectors - the satyr. They will enjoy a life of eternal pleasure and decadence, mixed with spurts of maddening warfare.

Ooooh, I like that idea.

07-15-2009, 07:15 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I was a bit ambiguous, but I was actually referring to the psychological ramifications of killing.

Separately, there really does seem to be a missing UberFey. There's the LeShay in 3E, but dual-

wielding lightsabre elves don't quite fit the traditional role. I like using hags or adapting vila or rusalka, but then I'm a fan of Russian folklore.

Yes, the Monstrous Manual does seem to be missing a good candidate for the "Noble Fey" archetype. I know you could just use a high-level elf, but that doesn't seem quite right for some kinds of "UberFey" like a Queen of the Seelie. I tend to just stat up such entities as unique individuals, which fortunately is a good deal easier in AD&D than 3rd edition.

I like using hags too, or taking a troll, ogre or giant and slapping on whatever funky fairy-tale power takes my fancy, like a giant that can *shapechange* into a huge boar, ogres that can enlarge themselves and vomit *darkness*, worgs that can paralyze a single victim by locking eyes with them, et cetera.

07-15-2009, 07:37 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Yes, the Monstrous Manual does seem to be missing a good candidate for the "Noble Fey" archetype. I know you could just use a high-level elf, but that doesn't seem quite right for some kinds of "UberFey" like a Queen of the Seelie. I tend to just stat up such entities as unique individuals, which fortunately is a good deal easier in AD&D than 3rd edition.

I'd probably go for a large vaguely shark-like creature made of wooden and thorn that can swim through earth and plants unimpeded like they were water, and whose fins trail tentacles of thorns that drag people to their deaths and also poison them. Oh and its dorsal fin has a big spike on top of it for impaling people, that counts as vorpal but for heart shots.

07-15-2009, 09:12 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I don't know about owlbears (and would frankly rather not), but the idea that elves and orcs can't interbreed is at least from this very Monstrous Manual, and possibly older: "orcs will crossbreed with virtually every humanoid and demihuman species except elves, with whom they cannot."

If I recall correctly that's in 1st edition AD&D as well. It prompts the question of why they cannot, considering some of the bizarre creatures that are considered humanoid in the game, most of whom orcs presumably can breed with.

Maybe it's impossible because orcs are a kind of anti-elf: Ugly instead of beautiful, vulgar instead of magical, fecund instead of extraordinarily slow-breeding, destructive instead of in tune with nature, short-lived instead of seeming ageless, et cetera.

Well, it's either that or you get an explosion if a race and anti-race breed.

Alternatively, perhaps the clue is in the "will crossbreed", and it's something in orcish culture/psychology rather than biology. Orcs may be unable to see elves as sexually desirable, being revolting willowy snoutless creatures who are loathsome in the eye of Groomsh.

Or maybe that's just a story they tell other races, and the result of an orc and elf union is a human, and they just don't want anyone to know this embarrassing secret.

07-15-2009, 10:51 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Or maybe that's just a story they tell other races, and the result of an orc and elf union is a human, and they just don't want anyone to know this embarrassing secret.

The two half races are actually quarterlings. Then we could always make gnomes a cross between dwarves and halflings. That way, everybody's related.

Humans and gnomes are emergent races. Perhaps *recently* emergent races. A magical barrier separating two separate humanoid ecosystems might have fallen, within recent memory. Perhaps the wall of fire that has divided the world between the realms of the gods and the realms of the titans since the Days of Creation finally flickered out, or the great dragon whose bones formed an impassible mountain range was resurrected, or two planes collided and merged during a rare celestial conjunction. The two races on one side of the barrier started to interact, to mix, with the two races on the other side. And along the great divide, two new races sprang up. These new races appear to be viable, but no one's entirely sure. It's just been a generation or so. None of the older races quite know what to make of these humans and gnomes. They're throwing all the old traditions into disarray, and causing some major upheaval. And the sex that caused the whole mess? That's *scandalous*.

07-15-2009, 11:44 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The two half races are actually quarterlings. Then we could always make gnomes a cross between dwarves and halflings. That way, everybody's related.

I considered actually making gnomes the cross between elves and dwarves, and the reason why the two races don't get along too well these days. Think about it: interested in crafts, especially mechanics, jewelry and gem-cutting; living underground in clans; long-lived and in tune with nature; uncanny aptitude with certain limited forms of magic...

They're dwelves, I tell you.

07-16-2009, 12:19 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Another possibility is that races are just that... vague collections of poorly defined traits based on individual, subjective perceptions. There's only one real species, the human. But many "races" of human, like dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, and so forth. The races aren't necessarily based on bloodlines, but perception. If the kids of a band of elves are short and stocky, everyone is going to call them dwarves.

And in this cosmopolitan age, even the traditional boundaries have started to blur. There are dwelves, dwarrow, dworgs, oorgs, gobbears, and dozens of terms used in an attempt to classify, group, marginalize, and define minute differences

between individuals. Perhaps the preponderance of "dw-" constructions suggests that the dwarf traits are considered dominant; "dwarf blood is powerful" says a great poet. Even a single drop is enough.

07-16-2009, 12:19 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

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They're dwelves, I tell you.

Well, both gnomes and halflings are "in between" races, with substrains leaning towards dwarven or elvenkind. (e.g. Stouts and Tallfellow halflings, svirfnebli and forest gnomes, although the latter take after brownies or sprites at least as much as they do elves.)

In my game I assume that most of these humanoid races (everything from a sprite to a giant) is a magically altered race of *Homo sapiens*, which is why they can all interbreed.

07-16-2009, 12:40 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Getting back to the current monster. There seems to be a lot of potential in Krakens, but I can't think of any published sources that exploit it. At best, they may have a Kraken as a lone menace sitting at the bottom of an abyssal gorge, with a few people in an air-filled chamber in its lair.

The description mentions them controlling "entire regions of the underwater world", shouldn't there be Tentacled Empires on some worlds, ruled by the mighty Lords of the Deep.

The mention of them depopulating many tropical islands is suggestive too. To do that they must be able to move about on land, presumably dragging themselves around by their immense arms and tentacles. The entry already says they can breathe air.

So, what plots would a Kraken weave with its super-genius brain? Seizing control of shipping lanes, using its fish & weather control powers to extort/reward humanoid races, such as the old "fishing village that worships a kraken in return for ample catches" ploy.

Come to think of it, I don't see why they can't have more open dealings with surface folk. Maybe the nation of the PC's enemies doesn't have a large conventional navy, but appoints Krakens as Captains or Admirals, or the pirates that are terrorizing the coastline are worshippers/followers/slaves or a Kraken Pirate King.

07-16-2009, 01:13 AM

thirdkingdom

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**
They're dwelves, I tell you.

Extreme sidetrack. So my wife and I were talking last night about what you call the place on the back of your leg opposite your knee, and my wife said "we could call it the 'eenk'". I thought that was great, and suggested we also coin the term "woble".

Sorry again for the sidetrack.

Todd

07-16-2009, 01:44 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

There's another place for krakens.

The D&D druidic hierarchy has always been strange. A bunch of reclusive loners, each obsessed with defending and protecting their home turf. They only really seem to get together when they need to choose a new leader, and they choose that leader by fighting with tooth and claw and magic. The leader holds together the squabbling assortment of Type A personalities by sheer force of will and raw power. Similar in many ways to a cult of personality. And their most powerful members, the hierophants, are retired, reclusive; withdrawn almost entirely from even the society of lesser initiates.

I like it best when the druidic hierarchy isn't particularly heavy on humans and demihumans. Tattooed orc shamans, dripping with the blood of their enemies. Wild centaurs raiders who embody the spirit of the wind. And stranger things. Elder treants, their upper limbs bedecked with noose after noose from which dangle the rotting bodies of their enemies. Nymph sorcerers, who see crushing visions of the future as they stare into their still pools. Disfigured green dragons, hiding their faces away in deep dells that have become twisted and deformed by exposure to their venomous breath. The collective song of the pods of humpback whales, which has become self-aware and will exist as long as there is one whale yet singing the endless melody. There might even be a circle in service to the barely-sapient but immensely powerful tarrasque, a ecstatic cult that exults at the manifestation of the Devourer.

And kraken, with their weather magics and coiled power that extends from the cold briny deeps to the white sandy shores. Druids are the Western version of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Priests, yes. But also spirits, natural primal powers. The hierarchy is predisposed to select the most powerful entity that embodies the nearby landscape as their leader, regardless of ethos or even nature. Soldiers no, but mystic warriors yes. Wizards won't qualify, because their studies pull them away. Natural spellcasters, sometimes. Bards, certainly. Natural spirits, if potent enough. Beasts, as long as they possess a shred of intelligence. These are the champions of the Green, the immanent *viridis*.

07-16-2009, 03:16 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Hmm, well if you combine the Tolkienish "orcs are corrupted elves" trope with the 1E Monster Manual's comment that orcs will breed with anything, that rather suggests elves will breed with anything, too.

This explains the million and one subspecies of elf, then. Fire elves have a strong Azer bloodline in them, say, while Wood elves have more Dryad and Treant in their family tree. Snow elves mated with yeti or quaggoths or something in the distant past, while Avariel are part aaracokra. And so forth and so on.

07-16-2009, 03:19 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

(Stupid me didn't read the entire post before replying)

07-16-2009, 03:33 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

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Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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I think you're on to something there. ;)

Treants would likely be unviable, since they are plants, and I suspect yeti are unlikely to be hominid enough. Azer, quaggoths and aaracokra are considered humanoids in AD&D, if I remember correctly, so they should be all right.

07-16-2009, 03:55 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I think you're on to something there. ;)

Treants would likely be unviable, since they are plants, and I suspect yeti are unlikely to be hominid enough. Azer, quaggoths and aaracokra are considered humanoids in AD&D, if I remember correctly, so they should be all right.

All the monsters were just off the top of my head. I'm sure a given GM would find appropriate monsters if they pursued this path.

07-16-2009, 04:18 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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This is high-quality awesome stuff all over the place. :)

07-16-2009, 04:34 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

This is high-quality awesome stuff all over the place. :)

Thank you :).

Though the treant with nooses is inspired on the Barrow King from *The Savage Sword of Meepo* story hour. He/it's one of the candidates in a contest to determine who will become the Grand Druid (worth reading; skip down to "Equinox: Prelude" on page 17 for the start of the sequence).

And Mr. Occam, the pixie manufacturer of the blue *dust of disappearance* from a few pages back, is based on Mr. Heisenberg from the AMC TV show *Breaking Bad*.

07-18-2009, 02:17 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

That is so cool.

I especially like the living whale-song and the tarrasque cult.

07-18-2009, 11:21 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Stirge

Stirges are one of those creatures which scream 'D&D': an icon. I really love Diterlizzi's illustration for it too - that strange cross between wasp and bat really works.

That said, there's not a huge amount to say about the creatures - as animal intelligence beasts they have no culture or society to discuss, and behave essentially as vampire bats, attacking to suck blood, then leaving and going off somewhere to sleep. They are however the only monster I can think of off hand which attack as higher HD monsters because they have an "instinctive ability" to find weak spots.

The entry goes into a curious level of detail in describing the sleeping habits of Stirges, noting that they sleep for a day for every 2 hit points on blood they drain, and are drowsy on waking and easy to kill that way. Were they envisaging revenge attacks by groups of adventurers on Stirge lairs? "I'll teach you to suck my blood. I'll come to your cave when you're sleeping and then we'll see how tough you are!"

I suppose the main Stirge adventure hook is having them be the explanation for mysterious disappearances of cattle and villagers, whose corpses are occasionally discovered drained of blood. I also like the idea of trained Stirges bringing stolen blood to a sinister archmage for some nefarious purpose or other.

07-18-2009, 12:03 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

You know, in a world where stealthy, blood-drinking flying monsters are as commonplace as stirges, it would make sense for people to take measures to prevent them. Perhaps there are specific herbs that, when burned, produce smells repellant to stirges. Maybe stirges don't like the tastes of specific humanoids, and so, say, orcs can live in stirge-infested areas.

Me, I really like the idea of humans keeping caged mammals on poles during stirge season. A rabbit on every street corner, ten feet up, to keep the little bastards from feeding on humans. In addition to lamp lighters, you have rabbit boys, running around every night and replacing dead, dessicated rabbits with fresh ones.

07-18-2009, 06:29 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Would "stirges" by any chance have originated as misspelt *striges*? In classical stories, the *strix*, pl *stirges* (AKA *striga*, pl *strigae*) is a vampiric bird, sometimes a shapeshifting witch, sometimes an apparently "natural" animal.

07-18-2009, 07:14 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

They are only one of two creatures that had two ecologies in Dragon (the behir is the other). I forget which one, but I like the idea of burning the dead in pyres the morning after they were killed- the smoke tells other communities that there has been a stirge attack.

07-18-2009, 08:10 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

Would "stirges" by any chance have originated as misspelt *striges*? In classical stories, the *strix*, pl *stirges* (AKA *striga*, pl *strigae*) is a vampiric bird, sometimes a shapeshifting witch, sometimes an apparently "natural" animal.

I believe that is so. In my own homebrew campaign I play up the connection, e.g. evil witches may have a stirge as a familiar, or be able to shapechange into a stirge.

Another idea I came up with was sapient stirges, who may live in colonies of hundreds of the blighters. Every night they venture out of their vast cavern-lairs to terrorize the entire land (well, the entire jungle to be precise), led by female sorcerer-stirges.

It seems reasonable to me that colonies of stirges are ruled by the females, since they're associated with female witches and have been compared to vampire bats, who are matriarchal.

Oh, and I also statted up the chupacabra as a larger relative of the stirge. Not that I'm the only one to come up with the notion of a giant ground stirge.

07-18-2009, 08:26 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

Me, I really like the idea of humans keeping caged mammals on poles during stirge season. A rabbit on every street corner, ten feet up, to keep the little bastards from feeding on humans. In addition to lamp lighters, you have rabbit boys, running around every night and replacing dead, dessicated rabbits with fresh ones.

Love that.

I also prefer them as aberrant bats, rather than insects. Perhaps the stirges hiding in dungeons are the exceptions. They really live in great caves and great cave systems, hanging upside down by the thousands or millions, and then flying out at night. Generally, they just sip. Only when starving or forming a new nest do they swarm, and threaten humanoids and other large animals. Dessicated corpses of cows are a sign something's gone wrong.

Stirges are everywhere, though only near-surface subterranean humanoids those who live near huge stirge-caves see them on a regular basis. Their sheer numbers make it infeasible to wipe them out, and simple precautions are all it takes to keep them away. The only time they're a worry is when they set up a nest in close proximity to a humanoid worksite or residence, like an attic or the new wing of a castle. And that's what adventurers are for. Fireballing an infestation during the day while they are sleeping isn't a solution, because their guano reacts explosively to flame. The other time when they might become a threat is when there's a great die-off in the local population of large herd animals. Beware the stirges after a major forest fire, or an unnatural calamity.

Their ability to sense in the dark is really just echolocation. They are phenomenally agile, like bats, due to this sense and the structure of their wings. Which explains their enhanced combat ability, and why they're rarely seen (even though they're omnipresent). Like bats as well, there might be dozens of varieties, feeding on different types of prey. The big ones might be vegetarians, fruit-eaters.

They also hang on the underside of bridges, and the local stirge-bridge is a popular romantic destination for young couples. They arrive in pairs during the twilight, and watch the stirges flit away from the underside, visible as flickers against the setting sun. The colored lamps and incense and dangling rabbits keep them safe, but they still get the rush of danger and the excuse to hold each other close.

07-18-2009, 08:43 PM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

A rabbit on every street corner, ten feet up, to keep the little bastards from feeding on humans.

Sorry, but wouldn't that be a bit like leaving food in the garden to keep rats out of your kitchen? How long do you think that would work for?:p

There is the question of course of what happens to a stirge when it sucks the blood of say, a vampire or lycanthrope. Could they become vectors?:eek:

07-18-2009, 09:20 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Sorry, but wouldn't that be a bit like leaving food in the garden to keep rats out of your kitchen? How long do you think that would work for?

Long enough for the stirge poison to kick in. Or for the stirge trap to strike, if you prefer. Just like why you leave cheese out for the rats: bait.

07-18-2009, 10:08 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Stirge

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Yes it is a nice picture, although I would have liked it to show some avian traits. The Monstrous Manual description twice says they resemble birds, but I've never seen a picture of a D&D Stirge with so much as a feather.

Oh, and you left out the MM's mention of the **Jungle Stirge**, a rumoured creature twice the size of a regular stirge (HD 2+2, attacks as 8HD) purported to have paralyzing venom on its snout, which is "highly prized by local tribesmen".

I'm sure I've seen a version of them statted up somewhere, but can't recall there. Regardless, they should make a nasty little tropical encounter.

07-18-2009, 10:15 PM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Long enough for the stirge poison to kick in. Or for the stirge trap to strike, if you prefer. Just like why you leave cheese out for the rats: bait.

So they're not decoys? The rabbits are poisoned? Why don't they die then? :)

07-18-2009, 10:26 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

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Well the classic version of the stirge, the strix/strigae/insert-spelling-of-your-choice was able to bleed a sleeping victim without them noticing. Presumably they have a painkilling substance in their saliva.

Some striges were said to nip pieces off corpses, I recall correctly these were usually the shape-shifting witch kind of stirge, not the bloodsucking animal. There are also stories of witch-striges being able to mesmerize wakeful people by calling out their names, putting them in a trance during which they can bite and blood-drain their unaware victim. There's a story by Apuleis about a man who was bewitched by stirges who took off his nose and replaced it with a waxen effigy *without him noticing*. When told about this by a corpse he was guarding (with the assistance of a passing necromancer) he reaches up and, to his horrified surprise, his "nose" falls off!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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If they're anything like the adventurers I've known, explosive guano would make it more likely they'd apply the *fireball* solution. Although if stirge guano is explosive there are probably all kinds of alchemical uses it can be put to, so maybe gathering it is a high-risk, high-reward, highly unpleasant activity.

Hmm, sounds like stirge-soil gathering is a job for the PCs!

07-18-2009, 10:27 PM

Lukas Sjöström

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The entry goes into a curious level of detail in describing the sleeping habits of Stirges, noting that they sleep for a day for every 2 hit points on blood they drain, and are drowsy on waking and easy to kill that way. Were they envisaging revenge attacks by groups of adventurers on Stirge lairs? "I'll teach you to suck my blood. I'll come to your cave when you're sleeping and then we'll see how tough you are!"

Useful if you're supposed to clean out a nest -- spend 10 gp on a cow, lead it out to be sucked dry, kill the stirges while they sleep.

EDIT: Actually, it seems as though you get more hp for your gp if you buy pigs instead. Cattle have HD 1-4 and cost 10 gp, pigs have HD 2 and cost 3 gp.

07-18-2009, 10:29 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

So they're not decoys? The rabbits are poisoned? Why don't they die then? :)

'Cause it's stirge poison, not rabbit poison.:o

There are plenty of pesticides that kill arthropods but do little or no harm to vertebrates. Since stirges have some insect-attributes, they may be vulnerable to them too.

07-18-2009, 10:33 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Lukas Sjöström**

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EDIT: Actually, it seems as though you get more hp for your gp if you buy pigs instead. Cattle have HD 1-4 and cost 10 gp, pigs have HD 2 and cost 3 gp.

Or just let them bleed your party's fighter, going by hit point scores they'll probably have more blood in them than a small herd of swine. :p

Hmm, if you get the pigs drunk on cheap hooch would the high blood-alcohol mean the stirges will be hungover as well as sleepy when you attack them?

07-18-2009, 10:38 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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There are plenty of pesticides that kill arthropods but do little or no harm to vertebrates. Since stirges have some insect-attributes, they may be vulnerable to them too.

This.

Alternately, it's also possible that Stirges are willing to drink blood from relatively fresh corpses, if it's available. In that case, the rabbits could already be dead, and still serve the same purpose.

I think "the town is full of ten foot poles with dead rabbits in cages on top of each one" would be a good way to freak out the PCs. And have them thinking that it's a town full of evil cultists, when it's just some innocent folks wanting to keep their blood inside their bodies.

07-18-2009, 10:43 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Michael Jackson? Too soon?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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If they blow up the attic or the new wing of the castle, they 1) don't get paid, 2) get fined a sufficient amount to recoup the damages, 3) get run out of town, 4) get throw in jail, 5) all of the above.

07-19-2009, 12:47 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

If they blow up the attic or the new wing of the castle, they 1) don't get paid, 2) get fined a sufficient amount to recoup the damages, 3) get run out of town, 4) get throw in jail, 5) all of the above.

Plus they are wasting valuable explosives that could be fashioned into a life-sized model of a female dragon...

07-19-2009, 01:46 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I fondly remember one of the suggested adventures in BECMI D&D's Expert set. There is this crazy old lady, who thinks her attic is haunted, but nobody believes her. So she offers her life savings to the PCs if they clear out the place... and it's crawling with stirges! (Also, there's the desiccated corpse of a thief who tried to sneak in and rob the COL's life savings...)

07-19-2009, 02:04 AM

four willows

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I love these 'let's read' threads.

07-19-2009, 02:36 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

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I don't know about the vampirism/lycanthropy spreading through stirge bites, but I do wonder why stirges haven't been used as disease vectors in D&D. They're nasty enough on their own, I guess. And it also gets me thinking about mutated stirges made even more monstrous by feeding on the blood of, say, dragons. Or the Tarrasque.

07-19-2009, 03:18 AM

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To combine the ideas... what if the tarrasque isn't a monster? What if it's actually a blood-borne pathogen? The first sign of infection is an all-consuming hunger. The creature starts to eat, and eat, and eat. Cows devour farms worth of crops. Wolves eat entire villages. The steward clean outs the manor's entire pantry. This is when the disease can be caught. People aren't stupid. Anything showing signs of the Hunger is put down, with extreme prejudice.

Because they know what will happen. If it's let alone for a few weeks, it keeps consuming, keeps growing. Becomes bigger. Large, then huge, then colossal. Growths start to develop on its back and paws. Horny, protruding things. This is terribly painful. This worsens its already bad temper. Because after all, it always feels like it's starving. Now it hurts to walk, to move.

But these growths are great for rending, tearing. Even the most harmless animal becomes dangerous, with the spikes and horns protruding from their heads and limbs. On the back, the growths are especially dense. Over time, it becomes almost like a carapace.

The huge appetite also accelerates the creature's metabolism. It digests food at an incredibly fast rate, allowing it to eat almost non-stop. It's no longer able to sleep, which further maddens it. And the fuel speeds up its ability to heal itself to ridiculous rates. It becomes a kind of living juggernaut, almost impossible to kill.

There isn't a singular tarrasque that goes to sleep, wakes up every score of years or so, and goes on a rampage. Instead, that's roughly how long a time lapses between major outbreaks.

This happens two different ways. Either there's a widespread outbreak, with many creatures infected with a low-level version of the Hunger. The kingdom mobilizes, armies range the countryside, volunteers march around with pitchforks and torches, and every adventurer is out killing. If they miss one infected animal, if it gets too big, suddenly they have a full-blown tarrasque problem.

The other way it happens is when the outbreak happens far away from civilization. One animal catches the disease, and by the time it stumbles on organized humanoids, it's too late. It's already too damn big to easily stop.

That's where the legend of the tarrasque comes from. It's a fantasy version of rabies. Get bitten, or eat its flesh or drink its blood, and you're infected. You'll go mad, eat everything in sight.

Stirges might be the disease's mosquito. If a flock lands on a tarrasque, they feed and become infected. The original beast heals too quickly to really notice. But now there's this swarm. A *hungry*, mutating swarm that infects other animals. This is when fireballing every stirge nest in the nation is considered acceptable.

07-19-2009, 03:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

If they blow up the attic or the new wing of the castle, they 1) don't get paid, 2) get fined a sufficient amount to recoup the damages, 3) get run out of town, 4) get throw in jail, 5) all of the above.

Hmm, a heavily armed and slightly charred group fleeing a smoking ruin complaining that the building's owner refused to pay them for the privilege, but sicced the town watch on them.

Yup, sounds like player character adventurers to me.:o

07-19-2009, 03:36 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

I don't know about the vampirism/lycanthropy spreading through stirge bites, but I do wonder why stirges haven't been used as disease vectors in D&D. They're nasty enough on their own, I

guess. And it also gets me thinking about mutated stirges made even more monstrous by feeding on the blood of, say, dragons. Or the Tarrasque.

Well that seems more reasonable than the 3rd edition's standard "dragon's can breed with anything" explanation of creatures with draconic traits. It would require a dragon with remarkably low standards to breed with a stirge. That or it involved an accident with a *philter of love*.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

To combine the ideas... what if the tarrasque isn't a monster? What if it's actually a blood-borne pathogen? The first sign of infection is an all-consuming hunger. The creature starts to eat, and eat, and eat. Cows devour farms worth of crops. Wolves eat entire villages. The steward clean outs the manor's entire pantry. This is when the disease can be caught. People aren't stupid. Anything showing signs of the Hunger is put down, with extreme prejudice.

SNIP

This happens two different ways. Either there's a widespread outbreak, with many creatures infected with a low-level version of the Hunger. The kingdom mobilizes, armies range the countryside, volunteers march around with pitchforks and torches, and every adventurer is out killing. If they miss one infected animal, if it gets too big, suddenly they have a full-blown tarrasque problem.

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That's where the legend of the tarrasque comes from. It's a fantasy version of rabies. Get bitten, or eat its flesh or drink its blood, and you're infected. You'll go mad, eat everything in sight.

Hmm, the thing is if it's that contagious you're more or less bound to get lots of tarrasque-infected before anyone knows of the outbreak. Most D&D worlds have extensive wildernesses filled with animal life, which have few non-monster sapients keeping track of what's going on.

I can see two obvious possibilities:

Firstly, the monsters may be just as keen on wiping out the tarrasque-plague as the "civilized" folk. They may even be willing to unite with those do-gooder elves and humans in the face of the mutual threat. (Hmm, there's a scenario in there, "form a pact with the orc kingdom of Thar to avoid all being eaten by the plague of tarrasques/ghouls/killer rabbits/insert-monster-here").

Secondly, there may usually end up being one tarrasque because the flesh the infected crave most of all is that of their own kind, and they soon eat each other until there is only one Colossal beast left.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Stirges might be the disease's mosquito. If a flock lands on a tarrasque, they feed and become infected. The original beast heals too quickly to really notice. But now there's this swarm. A *hungry*, mutating swarm that infects other animals. This is when fireballing every stirge nest in the nation is considered acceptable.

Not to mention that you'll end up with a swarm of *flying tarrasques*. Excuse me while I just reflect on some of the images that phrase inspires.

Flying Tarrasques.

Mwa ha haa haa ha! Soon the world and its PCs shall tremble before me!!

Ahem

Now, where were we?

07-19-2009, 04:03 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, the thing is if it's that contagious you're more or less bound to get lots of tarrasque-infected before anyone knows of the outbreak. Most D&D worlds have extensive wildernesses filled with animal life, which have few non-monster sapients keeping track of what's going on.

There's an ancient maenad, channeling the power of a thousand animals as she rends yet another man into bite-sized gibbets. There's the plump halfling baker, who seems to have an almost mystical connection with the grains and herbs and other ingredients he uses to construct elaborate confections. There's the reef composed of millions and trillions of living organisms that can transform mecha-like into a giant humanoid golem, which was crafted by a race of powerful magic-wielders from a now-sunken continent.

Why exactly does such a disparate band hang out with each other? The network of nature exists for one reason and one reason only: The tarrasque. What is the real reason behind the druidic circles, and the reason why the one in charge is always the one with the most raw power? It's very simple. They're there to wipe out any cases of the Hunger before they become too big to handle.

The queens and kings handle outbreaks within heavily populated regions, but out in the wild it's the druids. A great druid has a domain, and within the domain they must develop an early warning system, a network of informers and magical signals. The grand druid, on the other hand, is the one called in when things get out of hand. That's the only line in the grand druid's job description: If a tarrasque happens, anywhere in the world, kill it.

Which is why the hierophants are so obscenely powerful. The grand druid's job is for life. Either yours, or the next tarrasque's. Every single retired grand druid still living bears the scars from a successful battle with the greatest of all monsters. They are the survivors of the ultimate trial by combat.

This order predates civilization. It had to. Before cities could be built, there had to be druids. Because everytime someone tried the Hunger possessed an animal, and tore down everything the humanoids labored so hard to construct. Without the druids to watch the wilds, the little pockets of agriculture and leisure time just wouldn't have been able to grow.

07-19-2009, 11:09 AM

Simon Atavax

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Just out of curiosity, I have a question for those of you participating in this thread. (If this is an unwanted/unneeded digression, please disregard).

The question is, Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing?

Just curious. :o

07-19-2009, 11:11 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

You've left out an option. I'm seventeen (no nostalgia here), and I'm not playing *anything* (there aren't many groups in Pinellas Park). I just like reading about and coming up with ideas on the subject.

07-19-2009, 01:15 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**
(there aren't many groups in Pinellas Park).

Nearbygamers.com has about a dozen people registered in the area.

I'm here for the "steal ideas for 4e" myself.

07-19-2009, 01:37 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Simon Atavax**
Just out of curiosity, I have a question for those of you participating in this thread. (If this is an unwanted/unneeded digression, please disregard).

The question is, Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing?

Just curious. :o

I play AD&D 2e, like I have done since almost the beginning of my gaming life. I'm involved in one 2e game at the moment as a player (though my PC, 8th level dwarf cleric, is about to die, I fear). I'm not DMing any 2e stuff and haven't for a while (I'm currently DMing a BECMI game) but I hope to again soon.

2e is my favourite form of D&D and I don't really like 3.x or 4e, so no transferring of ideas here! I'm mainlining all this stuff in pure, undiluted 2e form.

EDIT: Which isn't to say there isn't a nostalgia element to all this, because the MM was the first D&D product I bought and I can still remember reading through it for the first time as a wide-eyed young sprog.

07-19-2009, 03:36 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Simon Atavax**

The question is, Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing?

Pure nostalgia. I don't even read the d20 subforum except for this.

07-19-2009, 04:27 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Some nostalgia, some ideas for my 3.x game.

07-19-2009, 05:37 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Simon Atavax**

The question is, Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing

Not at the moment, no.

Funnily enough, I only ever played 2nd edition twice. Most of my Dungeons & Dragons gaming and collecting has been 1st edition AD&D, Basic/Expert and 3rd edition. Of the few 2E hardbacks I've got, the Monstrous Manual is definitely my favourite.

07-19-2009, 06:55 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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I think whatever edition you like best it's very very hard not to enjoy the 2e Monstrous Manual. You'd have to have a heart of stone not to appreciate the mixture of absolute laughable oddness and sheer creative brilliance.

07-19-2009, 08:39 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Simon Atavax**

Just out of curiosity, I have a question for those of you participating in this thread. (If this is an unwanted/unneeded digression, please disregard).

The question is, Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing?

Just curious. :o

I will be honest, I am not a fan of D&D, as a game. Unlike a lot of gamers I pretty much completely bypassed D&D, starting on TMNT and Cyberpunk. D&D just seemed way too silly at the time (and I played TMNT!).

Plus I was not a fan of the fantasy genre, I am still not really as most fantasy books I have read seem really lame. I mean some farmboy finds some sword and then he has to adventure and find a princess and kill a dragon, it's Star Wars but with a dragon and without all the cool space ships, that is what it is (and without the incest).

I am, however, a fan of the balls-to-the-wall awesome insanity that can come with D&D. Some D&D products are basically Synnabar lite (i.e. utterly fucking insane but actually playable, and also sadly lacking in cyborgs). And the Monstrous Manuals and anything to do with Planescape are basically that.

My group got some good play out of 3e, but mostly we were mocking the fantasy genre with it (but then we mock/destroy all genres we come across). But anyways, prestige classes and over-optimisation totally ruined 3e, so we didn't use them. (You know those people in school who have got their whole career planned out from 3rd grade? "Well I'm going to law school, then I'll be a [something] lawyer for about 3 years, get a good reputation, then be a [something] lawyer for another 4 years, then go into corporate law where all the real money is, then try to make partner after 7 years..." Those are the sort of people who take prestige levels.)

So yeah, 3e, nice little game, played it a few times, but ruined by prestige classes, a flood of poor 3rd party content, and a Rifts-esk powercreep (oh and 3.5). We always played it like Order of the Stick anyways.

4e however is awesome and we have got some good play out of it. Though it is painfully (and awesomely) obvious that our characters know that they are in a computer game.

But, yeah, even though I was not really exposed to it as a kid, the insanity of D&D monster books will always have a special place in my heart.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Nearbygamers.com has about a dozen people registered in the area.

I added myself to that. Of course nearest groups listed are in London.

07-19-2009, 08:53 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I think whatever edition you like best it's very very hard not to enjoy the 2e Monstrous Manual. You'd have to have a heart of stone not to appreciate the mixture of absolute laughable oddness and sheer creative brilliance.

Half laughable oddness and creative brilliance about says it. Although it's not the only AD&D product that has some degree of that dichotomy.

I think it's the best core MM of any edition of D&D. It's got so many disparate bits on the monsters' habits it can

germinate hundreds of ideas for a campaign, and there's usually enough information to make some interesting (or amusing) deductions as to how they'd fit into a semi-plausible ecology or society. And even if I don't like their take on a monster, I find it acts as a springboard for "that makes no sense, my monster X will be Y instead" rather than making me want to throw out the monster altogether.

07-19-2009, 09:17 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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It has actually become a genre of its own, which has been copied with varied results.

You look at most fantasy heartbreakers and they are a largely charismaless ripoff of this sort of thing.

You look at Synnabar with its laserbears and supersonic sharks, "Like all sharks they are shapeshifters..." Yeah it says that. Synnabar monsters are the Monstrous Manuals done really really rite. Shame the system is more or less unplayable.

Also FATAL, the dumb evil D&D, is something else. The entry for bugbears is a prime example of why this game isn't like other games: Once you have read through the descriptions of who bugbears rape (everyone), why they rape (for fun), what percentage of the women* die (requires complex maths regarding tables and certain stats that you don't wanna know about), when the resulting fetuses all spontaneously and messily abort (4 months I think), and how many of the women die from that (40% I believe)... once you have read all through that then you will realise that it hasn't actually said anything about bugbears other than what is rape related; their society, their lifecycle, their proper mating habits with other bugbears... nope, just endless wish-fulfillment fantasies about Chewbacca rape (which incidentally there is a picture of on the cover of one of the editions). Of course the magic items section is even worse...

*Apparently bugbears are strictly heterosexual rapists, making them unique in FATAL World.

07-19-2009, 09:21 PM

Lukas Sjöström

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I'm not an AD&D player. My gaming life started with different iterations of BRP (since that's historically the largest system in Sweden), and I went right onto D&D 3.x and then 4th edition, which is the only thing I'm playing now. I still enjoy this thread, and the ideas I get from it are as often as not used for other games than D&D entirely.

07-19-2009, 10:27 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

This is primarily a nostalgia trip for me, but if or when I get my 4e game started, I'm sure to use some ideas from these threads. :)

07-20-2009, 12:48 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have to say I think D+D rules really really really stink. And they've only gotten worse over the editions. Runequest (or the pared down Call Of Cthulhu) rules is the only way to fly if you want anything to make sense.

Pity Glorantha sucks as bad as D+D rules though... hence Forgotten Realms is my favourite setting. Not that I've spent an *awfully* long time playing either...

07-20-2009, 01:46 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Some D&D products are basically Synnabar lite (i.e. utterly fucking insane but actually playable, and also sadly lacking in cyborgs).

Lacking in cyborgs? You've just been reading the wrong D&D materials.

07-20-2009, 02:19 AM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I played a bit of AD&D once, but it was not my first RPG, nor one I have much nostalgia for. Never played any other incarnation of D&D. The systems I actually do play are BRP and nWoD.

I'm in this thread because D&D monsters are an endless cavalcade (monstercade?) of weirdness, interpolated with horrid puns and bad Latin. That, and the splendidly insane commentary perpetrated by the other regulars here. :cool:

07-20-2009, 12:26 PM

Zartes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, I came to D&D in 3rd edition, but as time goes on, I'm becoming more enamored with the older stuff. So this is sort of retro-active nostalgia, with a helping of "Must use this in a game..."

07-20-2009, 07:38 PM

Requiem_17_23

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I used stirges in my first 4e dungeon ever. There were two towers with a dungeon beneath them; the stirges were in one tower, a big No Camping sign that meant the party had to find somewhere secure to rest that night. This they duly did. The party member who was on last watch heard the stirges fly back from their nightly hunting. She got the Explosive Guano Idea in her head, crossed it with the Stirges Sleep After Eating Idea, and ran off to the stirge lair with a burning torch.

The party were woken by the sound of a massive explosion to find their warlord gone. After a few panicked moments the door opens and in she comes, covered from head to toe in guano and smelling of burnt hair. "Piccolo, what happened?" - "Don't. Ask."

07-22-2009, 05:32 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Su-Monster

A real oddity this one, which I must confess I've never even thought of using. Essentially a big psionic ape, it mainly sticks out in my mind as being one of the "extra" psionic creatures in the 2nd edition Psionics Handbook - except neither it nor any of the others are really "extra" because they're all in the MM. They did have different art, though, and the Psionics Handbook Su-Monster illustration is considerably better than the MM iteration.

That said, after reading through the entry I feel like I've been doing the Su-Monster a disservice. There is something intrinsically sinister about apes and monkeys - something to do with how similar and yet dissimilar they are to us - and the description of the creature is nicely OTT:

Quote:

Su-monsters look like big gray monkeys, 4 to 5 feet tall. They have large bones and muscular limbs, but they always appear a bit underfed, because their ribs and vertebrae show prominently. Their long, prehensile tails can easily support their weight. Their hands and feet are virtually alike, each having three long, thick fingers and an opposable thumb, all equipped with claws. Like the tail, their hands and feet are very strong, allowing them to hang by one limb for several hours. Short, dirty gray fur covers most of their body. Their face and tail are black, while their paws are always bloody red (making them look like they just finished killing something, which is the case more often than not). They frequently grin, but this is usually a sharp-toothed threat rather than a gesture of friendliness.

Adult Su-Monsters attack as if *hasted* when their young are threatened (this should probably apply to most mammal and bird parents, I feel), and have a decent range of psionics, so they make a tough foe. Their meat is poisonous to eat (why anybody would want to eat a Su-Monster in the first place is not clear).

This entry sees the return of our old friends the Sages, who speculate that Su-Monsters are magical hybrids of humanoids and apes, created by "a powerful evil cleric or mage" as guardians. Most bog-standard creation story ever?

07-22-2009, 05:47 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Weren't su-monsters in the Ghost Tower of Inverness? I don't think I've ever seen them used, otherwise.

Anorexic evil psychic monkeys jumping from the trees should have potential, though. Seems a little Burroughsesque.

07-22-2009, 06:00 PM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Simon Atavax**

Are any of you still playing AD&D 2e? Or is this more of a nostalgia discussion, or a "transfer ideas to 3.x / 4e" thing?

I'm mostly here for the nostalgia, but it is strong nostalgia. When I bought this book back in the day, I didn't have any other AD&D books. I still don't, to this day (unless you count 3E, which isn't exactly A, but such things

get confusing). In fact, I wanted the book so badly I spent all the money I had on me, all the money my brother had on him, and we couldn't get home with the new book. We'd spent our train fares. We had to use a card phone (cellphones were a thing of the distant future at that time) to summon a parent with a vehicle, or we would have died of exposure or something hyperbolic like that.

And I'd do it again in a heartbeat. I regret nothing; it's a fantastic book.

07-22-2009, 06:09 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Su-Monster

A real oddity this one, which I must confess I've never even thought of using. *SNIP*
That said, after reading through the entry I feel like I've been doing the Su-Monster a disservice. There is something intrinsically sinister about apes and monkeys - something to do with how similar and yet dissimilar they are to us - and the description of the creature is nicely OTT:

For some reason I've liked Su-Monsters since 1st edition, so they've cropped up a few times in the games I've run. There's just something about the idea of Bloody-Handed Mind Monkeys that appeals to me.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Adult Su-Monsters attack as if *hasted* when their young are threatened (this should probably apply to most mammal and bird parents, I feel), and have a decent range of psionics, so they make a tough foe. Their meat is poisonous to eat (why anybody would want to eat a Su-Monster in the first place is not clear).

I never much cared for AD&D's fondness for the "the Mama/Papa monster gets much tougher if their young are threatened" trope. Sometimes it seems that half the animals players are likely to encounter were like that. While I'm fine with them viciously defending their spawn, giving them a big combat boost just doesn't jive with me.

As for the psionics, what makes them especially nasty is that the Su-Monster is *impervious to telepathic attacks*. That doesn't seem very fair, they could hide in the jungle and turn your psychic character's brains into swiss cheese without them having any way to respond in kind.

Then again, who said AD&D was fair.;;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

This entry sees the return of our old friends the Sages, who speculate that Su-Monsters are magical hybrids of humanoids and apes, created by "a powerful evil cleric or mage" as guardians. Most bog-standard creation story ever?

Hmm, I'm sure we can come up with something better. Here's my first stab.

Su monsters were created when our world was invaded by the Brains From Beyond. Intent on destroying the souls of the dominant humanoid race and occupying their bodies, the invading taskforce landed in an out of the way jungle and immediately possessed the locals. Fortunately the world, these alien's unfamiliarity with our

world meant they were unable to distinguish between "human" and "monkey". To a polydimensional disembodied intelligence, we all look the same, you know. The monkey's inferior brains were too weak to sustain the Brains' mighty intellect, and they soon devolved and mutated into the Su-Monsters we know and fear. Their psionic powers, malevolence and ability to *haste* are the last lingering vestiges of the Brains' evil nature and uncanny powers.

07-22-2009, 06:46 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Even back before they were psionic, su-monsters were nasty and territorial. Think baboons, but arboreal.

Then one day, something invaded their territory. Mother primordial-sus with babies in their arms stared down from the branches at the intruder, with an almost papable hate. The males circled around, silently, hair on end, infuriated

And the thing they were stalking? Loved it. The hate, the fear, the uncanny rage. Tasty. Distracting. The intellect devourer got a little too absorbed in its mental feast, and the next thing it knew it was rolling around on the ground, trailing a dozen screeching monkeys, who were clawing and biting and tearing.

Half the tribe died that day, but so did the big brain with claws. Their hate augmented by its aura, they tore it to pieces. And did something uncharacteristic for a band of mostly-fructivores. They ate the raw dripping flesh.

The rage stayed with them. With the intellect devourer's demise, it became permanently grafted into their brains. And a bit of its power, too. Like the tribal humans believe, they took on a few characteristics of that which they ate. They became psychic.

And like many other psychic creatures, such as the emaciated thought eater, the mental powers took a physical toll on their formerly stocky bodies. Those powers require fuel, and no matter how many mangos or stolen babies they eat, the su-monsters are always half-starved. Which of course makes them even more irritable.

07-22-2009, 08:27 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I use su-monsters with tasloi in the same way that bargests are meant to be used with goblins. The party thinks they have another tasloi, hiding in the leaves, on their hands until it fries a brain or two.

Most arboreal monsters have a great potential for destroying parties piecemeal. Just grab them one at a time and kill them a few trees over.

07-22-2009, 09:52 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

SNIP

Half the tribe died that day, but so did the big brain with claws. Their hate augmented by its aura, they tore it to pieces. And did something uncharacteristic for a band of mostly-fructivores. They ate the raw dripping flesh.

The rage stayed with them. With the intellect devourer's demise, it became permanently grafted into their brains. And a bit of its power, too. Like the tribal humans believe, they took on a few characteristics of that which they ate. They became psychic.

Well it's a nice scenario but wouldn't work in AD&D, unless the Proto Su-Monsters have the +3 or better magical weapons needed to hit the Intellect Devourer. They could claw at the brainbeast until they drop from exhaustion without so much as scratching it.

Although the "they gain psychic powers and malevolence from an infusion of a nasty psionic monster" theory has plenty of other candidates. Perhaps the Su Monsters' ancestors developed a taste for Brain Moles and a psionic version of the Oblivix - they taste like truffles to a mental monkey, don't you know.~)

07-22-2009, 10:02 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I use su-monsters with tasloi in the same way that barghests are meant to be used with goblins. The party thinks they have another tasloi, hiding in the leaves, on their hands until it fries a brain or two.

Most arboreal monsters have a great potential for destroying parties piecemeal. Just grab them one at a time and kill them a few trees over.

Same here, I liked to throw Kechs and Carnivorous Apes at them too.

As for the Su-Monsters & Tasloi subterfuge, I like the idea. It suggests that a Su-Monsters "natural prey" is the Tasloi, so it looks like them to aid its ability to sneak up to its next meal.

Although you'd need to change one or the other creature's appearance, since a Tasloi's half the size of a Su Monster and a different colour. (2-3' with green skin & black fur, versus 4-5' with white fur and red hands). Come to think of it, a Kech is green and IIRC they sometimes use ventriloquism, so maybe they're a better fit for the tactic.

07-22-2009, 10:22 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Don't barghests rule the goblins they live with? My su-monsters dominate tasloi villages and act as muscle when needed. Now that I think about it, tasloi may have their own versions of blues due to the constant contact with su-monsters.

07-22-2009, 10:35 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well it's a nice scenario but wouldn't work in AD&D, unless the Proto Su-Monsters have the +3 or better magical weapons needed to hit the Intellect Devourer. They could claw at the brainbeast until they drop from exhaustion without so much as scratching it.

Always so negative... there are more ways to kill things than "I roll to hit". Drowning, suffocation, falling, fire, starvation, poison, allergic reactions....

07-22-2009, 10:45 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Always so negative... there are more ways to kill things than "I roll to hit". Drowning, suffocation, falling, fire, starvation, poison, allergic reactions....

True enough, except for the fire, which Intellect Devourers are immune to.

I was just saying the proposed scenario of "clawing and biting and tearing" wouldn't work for the Su Monsters in AD&D, at least without attenuating circumstances.

Maybe the local crazy druid enchanted them with *+3 claws and teeth*.:)

07-22-2009, 11:05 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Don't barghests rule the goblins they live with? My su-monsters dominate tasloi villages and act as muscle when needed. Now that I think about it, tasloi may have their own versions of blues due to the constant contact with su-monsters.

Oh right, I was thinking it was more a "you see a Tasloi... surprise! It's really a much more dangerous Su-Monster!" kind of thing. Although having them work together makes sense, since Tasloi can speak with monkeys and apes and are noted for exploiting the abilities of more powerful monsters in their neighbourhood, having them invite Su-Monsters to move in and live with them is just an extension of that.

And yes, AD&D Barghests are described as becoming chiefs or honoured champions of the goblin settlements they live in, so I imagine a Tasloi / Su-Monster society doing something similar. Presumably the relationship would be more volatile, since they're both Chaotic Evil.

07-23-2009, 12:52 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I was just saying the proposed scenario of "clawing and biting and tearing" wouldn't work for the Su Monsters in AD&D, at least without attenuating circumstances.

It created a new species... even in D&D that probably qualifies as extenuating circumstances. Plus it's a jungle. There's an ancient ruin built by a lost but unfathomably powerful race, what, every 30 feet or so? The average fallen cornice is probably a +3 improvised weapon.

Anyway, I like the image of a troop of screaming monkeys wrestling around on the ground with a giant brain with claws. The details are less important :)

07-23-2009, 01:49 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

It created a new species... even in D&D that probably qualifies as extenuating circumstances. Plus it's a jungle. There's an ancient ruin built by a lost but unfathomably powerful race, what, every 30 feet or so? The average fallen cornice is probably a +3 improvised weapon.

Anyway, I like the image of a troop of screaming monkeys wrestling around on the ground with a giant brain with claws. The details are less important :)

Hang about, I typed "attenuating" when I meant "extenuating" circumstances, maybe it was a Freudian slip and there was something weakening the Intellect Devourer. Perhaps the monkeys were wrestling the brain with claws in a mud pool with strange magical properties which, by some miracle, did not spawn a nest of Mudmen, or the cornice they hit it with acted like a *philter of longevity* and youthed the Intellect Devourer back into its larval stage, in which form it is vulnerable to mundane weapons.

Hmm, or maybe it's what the Intellect Devourer wanted all along. The Monstrous Manual says "their reproductive method is unknown", so perhaps when a brain-beast reaches the end of its life they spawn by dominating primates (apes, monkeys or humans) into eating them in a murderous frenzy, and those who eat it undergo a strange and horrible transformation into a Su-Monster. The reason they have psionic powers is that their brains are actually fetal Intellect Devourers, which bursts out of their skulls as an ustilagor if the Su-Monster manages to live long enough for it to mature into its motile larval stage. That is also why Su-Monsters attack psionic creatures, the Intellect Devourer spawn within them needs the cerebral matter and fluids of such creatures to mature.

EDIT: That could also explain why an arboreal tropical primate like a Su-Monster is drawn to dark and subterranean areas, since this is the habitat the Intellect Devourer within it prefers. When the brain-beast fetus in its skull is close to hatching, it probably seeks out an entrance to the Underworld, so the ustilagor is born into its native subterranean environment.

07-23-2009, 02:30 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Most arboreal monsters have a great potential for destroying parties piecemeal. Just grab them one at a time and kill them a few trees over.

<http://img33.imageshack.us/img33/1565/alfredcain.jpg>

Burn their fucking forest down Master Bruce.

07-23-2009, 04:59 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I never much cared for AD&D's fondness for the "the Mama/Papa monster gets much tougher if their young are threatened" trope.

Which begs the question why adventures don't get a bonus for trying to defend *themselves* from attack. Aren't they, like, as pissed as they can possibly get?

You could make a case for bringing your children questing with you if you got an automatic *haste* every time you thought they were in danger... :)

07-23-2009, 05:14 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

You could make a case for bringing your children questing with you if you got an automatic *haste* every time you thought they were in danger... :)

See *Lone Wolf and Cub* for details.

And you could always resurrect the young ones if anything untoward were to happen... any PC who's survived long enough to reproduce has got to be high enough level to know someone with a resurrection, right?

07-23-2009, 09:19 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, or maybe it's what the Intellect Devourer wanted all along. The Monstrous Manual says "their reproductive method is unknown", so perhaps when a brain-beast reaches the end of its life they spawn by dominating primates (apes, monkeys or humans) into eating them in a murderous frenzy, and those who eat it undergo a strange and horrible transformation into a Su-Monster. The reason they have psionic powers is that their brains are actually fetal Intellect Devourers, which bursts out of their skulls as an ustilagor if the Su-Monster manages to live long enough for it to mature into its motile larval stage. That is also why Su-Monsters attack psionic creatures, the Intellect Devourer spawn within them needs the cerebral matter and fluids of such creatures to mature.

EDIT: That could also explain why an arboreal tropical primate like a Su-Monster is drawn to dark and subterranean areas, since this is the habitat the Intellect Devourer within it prefers. When the brain-beast fetus in its skull is close to hatching, it probably seeks out an entrance to the Underworld, so the ustilagor is born into its native subterranean environment.

I kind of like that. Reproduction by fungal infection. Which suggests that the adult brain beast actually *is* a giant fungus. Sort of going back to it's roots, in a way. Back before 2E turned ustilagor into larval intellect devourers, the pre-retcon version actually *was* a motile quasi-sentient fungus, not just "usually covered with a gray fungus".

The skull bit also explains why the larval and adult stages look like brains, even though they're actually a couple of kingdoms away from that particular organ. Their birth environment is the inside of a skull, and they take the shape and form of their host as they devour it. Even mimicked the organization of the neural network, which helps to explain why mold got smart. They're not brains. They're what ate the brains, replaced then, and took their form. They're to brains what pod-people are to people-people. They're pod-brains.

Which means intellect devourers are basically copies of monkeys. They'd do it in an alien way, but certain behavioral traits might carry over. Imagine a sated intellect devourer, attracted to the nearest brains that most resemble its own. Underground, no luck with actual monkeys. But there are primates, all over. Even in adventuring parties.

The big old brain is happy and well fed. Not looking to fry any brains or anything impolite. Just looking for a little socialization. A little grooming. Imagine waking up to a giant brain with huge claws, carefully picking the lice out of your hair. Then its shock as it *hears* you completely freak out. It was just being friendly....

07-23-2009, 04:45 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I kind of like that. Reproduction by fungal infection. Which suggests that the adult brain beast actually *is* a giant fungus. Sort of going back to it's roots, in a way. Back before 2E turned ustilagor into larval intellect devourers, the pre-retcon version actually *was* a motile quasi-sentient fungus, not just "usually covered with a gray fungus".

Didn't Brian Aldiss write a SF novel about essentially this? :)

07-23-2009, 06:15 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Which begs the question why adventures don't get a bonus for trying to defend *themselves* from attack. Aren't they, like, as pissed as they can possibly get?

It's not about being pissed-offness. When fighting for your own life, your death is an unacceptable cost by definition - when fighting for those of your offspring, your own death is possibly a worthwhile sacrifice, meaning Mama Bear is apt to fight with more all-out aggression than she'd do in protection of her own skin.

07-23-2009, 08:07 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

so I imagine a Tasloi / Su-Monster society doing something similar. Presumably the relationship would be more volatile, since they're both Chaotic Evil.

That would work very well if the DM played up the "chimps eat human faces" meme. Tasloi dominated clans would be obvious because they are missing bits of ears and fingers.

07-23-2009, 08:19 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

Didn't Brian Aldiss write a SF novel about essentially this? :)

Sorry, haven't read any of his works. Quick summary?

07-23-2009, 08:54 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hothouse_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hothouse_(novel))

One of his worst works. He constantly changes the world to fit the story. But it does have an intelligent, mind controlling fungus.

07-23-2009, 09:00 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The Moon is connected to the Earth with cobwebs? I stopped reading there :p

Edit: (Which could be kind of cool... but not in a science fiction novel.)

07-24-2009, 02:55 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The Moon is connected to the Earth with cobwebs? I stopped reading there :p

Edit: (Which could be kind of cool... but not in a science fiction novel.)

You know where it would be cool? In a D&D setting. Hello, new home base for the Spider Goddess. To get to the moon and the stars, the heroes have to climb here gigantic web that stretches across reality.

07-24-2009, 03:33 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

You know where it would be cool? In a D&D setting. Hello, new home base for the Spider Goddess. To get to the moon and the stars, the heroes have to climb here gigantic web that stretches across reality.

I'm not a huge fan of the traditional planes of existence where everything is so... separate. I really like the idea of planes that criss and cross, and nobody's sure where one stops and the other begins. There's no teleporting, or gates, or suddenly fading away via a plane shift. Instead, there are faerie roads and shadow walking and thresholds and doors and circles of mushrooms or menhirs that subtly shift from one realm to the next.

Sounds like the demonweb. Hung over the Abyss, the blackness between worlds. Not accessed through some gate that takes you to an entirely separate world, but a huge silvery thing hanging in the sky. An arch, a bridge between this world and the world of lunacy, lycanthropes, romance, and dreams. Gives Lolth quite a portfolio. The Dream Maiden. The Queen of the Silver Threads. Passion. Madness. Lust. Love. Transformation. Claws.

Edit: Explains the yochol and the driders.

07-24-2009, 06:05 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

It's not about being pissed-offness. When fighting for your own life, your death is an unacceptable cost by definition - when fighting for those of your offspring, your own death is possibly a worthwhile sacrifice, meaning Mama Bear is apt to fight with more all-out aggression than she'd do in protection of her own skin.

I can understand how protecting young might affect a morale check or make an animal more aggressive, but is a bear/boar/whatever really any more nasty when defending its young than when hunting or being attacked? Don't buy it myself.

I'm not sure what your point is exactly either. Isn't fighting to the death and with as much aggression as possible "a worthwhile sacrifice" to save your own life?

07-24-2009, 06:08 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

I can understand how protecting young might affect a morale check or make an animal more aggressive, but is a bear/boar/whatever really any more nasty when defending its young than when hunting or being attacked? Don't buy it myself.

Yes.

Quote:

I'm not sure what your point is exactly either. Isn't fighting to the death and with as much aggression as possible "a worthwhile sacrifice" to save your your own life?

No. You've got to hold back at least a little so that you can *stay* alive afterward.

07-24-2009, 06:19 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Isn't fighting to the death and with as much aggression as possible "a worthwhile sacrifice" to save your own life?

If you attack with utter aggression and no thought for your own defense, you are likely to die. That defeats the purpose if your goal is to defend yourself. But it fits the purpose just fine if your goal is to defend your small child, so an animal that is protecting its young can be far more aggressive (by not worrying about its own safety).

07-24-2009, 06:23 AM

Kinetic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

I can understand how protecting young might affect a morale check or make an animal more aggressive, **but is a bear/boar/whatever really any more nasty when defending its young than when hunting or being attacked?** Don't buy it myself.

I'm not sure what your point is exactly either. Isn't fighting to the death and with as much aggression as possible "a worthwhile sacrifice" to save your own life?

Hell yes. I was taught in grade school that a bear, for example, is at its most dangerous when protecting its cubs.

07-24-2009, 06:44 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kinetic**

Hell yes. I was taught in grade school that a bear, for example, is at its most dangerous when protecting its cubs.

Indeed it may be more aggressive, but once it's decided to kill you does it actually move twice as fast and bite twice as hard as if it was just eating you? Again, I'd contest that reaction and morale might be affected, but nothing else.

07-24-2009, 06:58 AM

Kinetic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Indeed it may be more aggressive, but once it's decided to kill you does it actually move twice as fast and bite twice as hard as if it was just eating you? Again, I'd contest that reaction and morale might be affected, but nothing else.

It's the reactions that are different when cubs are involved, and the reaction determines how hard they are going to fight. Bears are not usually out to kill on sight, unless there is something wrong with them (rabies is a good example). They will, if cornered, fight like hell until they have a way out. Then they're off. If there are cubs

involved, they will fight like hell. Period. End of story. That's when they decide that you die and that's when they start swinging for the fences.

07-24-2009, 07:14 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kinetic**

It's the reactions that are different when cubs are involved, and the reaction determines how hard they are going to fight. Bears are not usually out to kill on sight, unless there is something wrong with them (rabies is a good example). They will, if cornered, fight like hell until they have a way out. Then they're off. If there are cubs involved, they will fight like hell. Period. End of story. That's when they decide that you die and that's when they start swinging for the fences.

Um, so you're with me on the morale and reaction roll then? If they *do* decide to eat you then you get bitten just as much as if they're protecting their young? If they *are* cornered do they fight twice as fast and bite twice as hard until they can escape?

THACO, attacks per round, damage per attack... all identical IMO.

07-24-2009, 07:30 AM

Kinetic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Um, so you're with me on the morale and reaction roll then? If they *do* decide to eat you then you get bitten just as much as if they're protecting their young? If they *are* cornered do they fight twice as fast and bite twice as hard until they can escape?

THACO, attacks per round, damage per attack... all identical IMO.

No.

If a bear is cornered it does fight, and it fights hard, but it also holds back because the first instinct is (usually) to run. Bears are not king of the wilderness and out for the blood of everyone that trespasses. They won't chase you if they are wanting to get away, for example. They may not charge you, they may swipe at you while they are moving backwards or try to bat you aside while they attempt to get by you, or any number of other defensive maneuvers.

If they have a cub in the mix, they will attack you all out until you're no longer moving. They don't generally think about running at that point, and there's no reason for them to hold back. They will charge you, they will maul you, they will try to take your head from your body if they think you are a legitimate threat to their cub.

They react differently, but, because of that reaction, you have one hell of a monster on your hands when a cub is involved.

EDIT

One interesting thing about bears, since you mentioned being eaten, is that they look for the best food with the smallest effort. If they think a person is a good snack but that person fights like a howling madman, they will probably look elsewhere for food. Goes against everything taught in school about playing dead, doesn't it? That's your other option, but if hunger is why the bear is really wanting to get you then you're probably going to die. Most of the times when a bear attacks it's because curiosity turned to fear or because they feel threatened, or have a young one that they feel is threatened.

From 1900 to 2001 there were only 133 deaths reported due to bears, but I can't find numbers on how many of those were during an incident where there was a cub involved to help support this discussion.

All in all, it's a game. Have your bears react the way you want them to react. Not everything is going to be based on reality in a game where people can have wishes come true, fight dragons, and throw fireballs. The way I'd run an encounter with bears would be based off the one encounter I've had close up with a bear and what I've seen on Discovery (because once was enough for me and bears look cool enough on TV).

07-24-2009, 07:37 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kinetic**

They react differently, but, because of that reaction, you have one hell of a monster on your hands when a cub is involved.

Which still doesn't answer why, if they **do** decide to eat you, they don't get bonuses. Do you think they hold back when they're trying to take down a moose just because their young aren't involved? Yes, if the fight goes badly they'll turn and run, but that's a morale roll, nothing to do with their effectiveness while actually attacking. Again, THACO, damage etc not affected.

07-24-2009, 07:41 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kinetic**

All in all, it's a game. Have your bears react the way you want them to react. Not everything is going to be based on reality in a game where people can have wishes come true, fight dragons, and throw fireballs.

I'm aware this is a discussion about a 30 year old RPG book on a web forum. My children aren't in danger!;)

07-24-2009, 09:40 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DanSolo**

Which still doesn't answer why, if they **do** decide to eat you, they don't get bonuses. Do you think they hold back when they're trying to take down a moose just because their young aren't involved? Yes, if the fight goes badly they'll turn and run, but that's a morale roll, nothing to do with their effectiveness while actually attacking. Again, THACO, damage etc not affected.

We're getting way off the topic of Su-Monsters here, but I'll stick my oar in anyway.

I think the point is that bears (in fact animals generally) will put in the minimum effort they can get away with. Killing a moose doesn't require them going apeshit, so they don't. They just kill the moose. (Usually a sick or old one, if they're like any other kind of predator.) But when their young are threatened they put in the maximum

effort and go very apeshit. This is represented by small mechanical bonuses in the rules.

My main experience of this is being dive bombed in my garden by blackbirds who thought I was threatening their young. If those birds weren't *hasted* they were pretty close to it!

07-24-2009, 09:48 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

My main experience of this is being dive bombed in my garden by blackbirds who thought I was threatening their young. If those birds weren't *hasted* they were pretty close to it!

I didn't know there were any SR-71s modified into bombers. Or reconnaissance planes with *young*. :) Perhaps they perch on Lolth's web, black specks on the cobwebs that reach to the moon. Her web becomes the Yggdrasil of the world. The big sleek black steel birds might have beating hearts with names like Dáinn, Dvalinn, Duneyrr, and Durathrór.

07-24-2009, 06:54 PM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Fortunately I live in a land without native mammals, so it's unlikely that I'll ever be chased by a bear. But it's one of those well-known things: animals protect their young. In most cases, combat in the natural world is relatively safe. Stags crack their antlers together in ritual combat. Lionesses hunt weaker prey. Bears go fishing. Humans wander through the woods and come out the other side, because the inhabitants tend to respect us. It's not particularly epic, and the predators tend to live.

But when survival of the lineage is at stake, things get crazy. Risks are taken. Sacrifices are made. It's like Miyamoto Musashi showing up to a duel with a pair of handcuffs and wearing a dynamite vest: the other guy isn't going to be walking away, but Musashi isn't going to maintain his survival record either. It's a whole different approach to combat: make the other guy lose, don't worry about winning for yourself.

The whole 'power of friendship' thing that cartoons harp on about has some pretty strong roots in biology.

07-24-2009, 09:50 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I'm not a huge fan of the traditional planes of existence where everything is so... separate. I really like the idea of planes that criss and cross, and nobody's sure where one stops and the other begins. There's no teleporting, or gates, or suddenly fading away via a plane shift. Instead, there are faerie roads and shadow walking and thresholds and doors and circles of mushrooms or menhirs that subtly shift from one realm to the next.

I think the same, I often have games where the PCs travel to "The Other Side" (usually some kind of faerie realm) by travelling down a mysterious tunnel, walking up the Spiral Path of Spiral Hill on midsummer's eve and the like.

07-24-2009, 09:56 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

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My main experience of this is being dive bombed in my garden by blackbirds who thought I was threatening their young. If those birds weren't *hasted* they were pretty close to it!

To my way of thinking, the stats in the Monster Manual represent the monster making a concerted effort to kill/injure/drive-away their opponents. In real life, animals will only go to that effort if something serious is at stake, i.e. the cornered rat syndrome or "protecting the next generation".

Oh, and in the case of bears, the Monstrous Manual version* does not give females protecting their cubs and special benefits. It just says "bears tend to avoid humans unless provoked. Exceptions to this rule can be a most unfortunate occurrence." and "Female bears are very protective of their young, and more than one individual has been badly injured when taunting or playing with seemingly harmless bear cubs." which seems an eminently sensible way of putting it.

*Although if I remember correctly the 1st edition version gave females a to hit & damage bonus when defending their cubs, but I'm too lazy to pull out my old Monster Manuals to check.

07-24-2009, 10:27 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

OK, getting back to Su-Monsters. I think it makes the most sense for an animal to "burn itself out" protecting its young when one or both of the following conditions apply:

If it does die, the young are able to fend for themselves until they reach maturity.

If the young die, it can not produce enough offspring to replace them. It may have an "all eggs in one basket" approach to reproduction.

So, if we apply these ideas to the Fungal Su-Monster concept, what can we come up with?

If a "family" of Fungal Su-Monsters are actually all siblings from one Intellect Devourer's infestation of a pack of primates, it makes sense to risk sacrificing half their numbers if it ensures the other half survive. Having the larger ones "haste out" presumably increases their chance of survival than having the smaller spawn sacrifice them.

Furthermore, an Intellect Devourer fungal fetus may grow with great speed if it eats another Su-Monster's brains. So, if the small "young" survive and the larger "adults" die, they may be able to quickly mature by eating their fallen protectors.

Normally Fungal Su-Monsters don't eat other pack-members, since the Intellect Devourer will get more offspring if it all the monkeys it infects take a 3-5 years to mature than if they eat each other and the sole survivor matures over a few short months. I would think they will enthusiastically eat Su-Monsters of other families, though.

Alternatively, the larger Su-Monsters may save their cubs to eat later. Perhaps when the family goes down into the Underworld to hatch into ustilagors, those that are not quite mature enough eat their weaker siblings to give them the nutritional boost they need to become larval brain-beasts.

07-28-2009, 10:31 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Swanmay

Ah, the Swanmay. Feathered protector of nature, slayer of those who threaten swans, wearer of white robes... A female ranger who can turn into a swan, essentially, which is rather a strange idea in many respects. I wonder if it comes from real world myth or legend? What's oddest about it is that the entry doesn't specify when or why Swanmays turn into swans, and nor does it really explain what advantages the Swanmay gains from doing so. Immunity from normal weapons is available in swan form, but on the other hand this includes sacrificing any sort of damage-dealing worth the name, and the ability to wear or wield equipment. I suppose having the ability is useful for the purposes of disguise and hiding, but...

The other thing that puzzles me about the entry is that it explicitly describes Swanmays as a variety of lycanthrope (therianthrope...whatever), and yet they get a separate entry. Weird, eh?

On the plus side, I like the idea of a secret society of swan-women lurking in the shadows of human society, working towards mysterious aims in the name of protecting nature. If a DM doesn't know how to use that in a campaign, he needs his head examined. Although as with many "mysterious" D&D beings, there isn't much in the way of mystery for seasoned players, who will instantly shout "Swanmay!" as soon as they meet a woman with a swan-feather ring, brooch or bracelet.

Bird Maiden

This section of the entry is probably the most egregious example of setting-specificity in the entire MM - regular readers will already know this is a pet hate of mine, but I challenge anybody not to read through the Bird Maiden part and not think "If I didn't know about Al Qadim, I wouldn't have a clue what any of this is about." I mean, for starters, you can't even use a Bird Maiden in a game if you don't know what a kahina is.

Which is a shame, because as with most Al Qadim creatures there's a nice Arabian Nights flavour to the Bird Maidens - from how if a man steals one's shawl he can force her to marry him, to the way they study the ways of the kahina from Aaracocra in a special castle in the clouds.

07-28-2009, 10:45 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Ah, I can recall being infatuated with the swanmay as a youth.

Swanmays do indeed hail from myth: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan_maiden

I do think that transformation tokens should be used more often - imagine if a wizard who wanted to polymorph into something needed a bit of it first... and if he couldn't turn back if he lost it. You can imagine a mage desperately searching for the ogre scalp he needs to turn back before his mind shifts forever.

One of the weirder bits of the entry is if a PC is invited to join - there's just a flat chance given that she accepts and retires into NPC-hood! As for why to use swan-form, apparently swans have very acute senses? And can fly?

Incidentally, I believe that the Complete Book of Humanoids allowed for druid swanmays, as well as rangers.

As far as Bird Maidens go, I've always assumed that kahina are just specialty priests.

07-28-2009, 10:53 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Ah, I can recall being infatuated with the swanmay as a youth.

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Incidentally, I believe that the Complete Book of Humanoids allowed for druid swanmays, as well as rangers.

As far as Bird Maidens go, I've always assumed that kahina are just specialty priests.

Yeah, that 50% chance of becoming an NPC is a bit weird. No, player, it is not for you to decide!

I think the kahina are just specialty priests, but it really needs to say that in the entry instead of just assuming everybody owns Al Qadim material. The stat run-down even contains lines such as "THACO: As kahina".

07-28-2009, 12:02 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Ah, I can recall being infatuated with the swanmay as a youth.

Swanmays do indeed hail from myth: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan_maiden

Although, in this case, I would bet you anything you care to name that they were derived pretty much entirely from Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*.

07-28-2009, 06:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I do think that transformation tokens should be used more often - imagine if a wizard who wanted to polymorph into something needed a bit of it first... and if he couldn't turn back if he lost it. You can imagine a mage desperately searching for the ogre scalp he needs to turn back before his mind shifts forever.

Oh yes, there's plenty of potential in transformation tokens.

I'm having difficulty coming up with adventure ideas for Swanmays. Apart from the obvious one of the PCs helping a swanmay recover her stolen swan-token, most of the other ideas I could think of (e.g. joining with Swanmays to attach despoilers of the forest, hunting down a spy who has discovered a Swanmays' lodge before she can expose the secret of its location, etc) work just as well for a secret sorority of regular, non-lycanthrope, rangers. Hmm, unless something could be done with a Swanmay who doesn't want to be a Swanmay anymore?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

As for why to use swan-form, apparently swans have very acute senses? And can fly?

As it is, their ability to turn into a swan is mostly useful for scouting/message-carrying. There are plenty of Sylvan creatures that are better suited for that job (e.g. there are fey who are smaller, fly faster and more adeptly and can turn invisible). They do scant damage in swan form (an average of 3.5 if they hit with all 3 attacks) and have lousy AC, if they're up against a creature with a magic weapon they're pretty well toast unless they can fly away. A Swanmay can't even defend herself effectively by turning back into a human, because the transformation doesn't affect equipment, only her swan-token. She'd be facing her opponents naked apart from a "feather token, feathered garment, or signet* ring", not a very desirable position to be in.

*Shouldn't that be a cygnet ring.;

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

As far as Bird Maidens go, I've always assumed that kahina are just specialty priests.

Yes, a kahina is a variant priest. I don't see where all this fuss about it being undefined is coming from, since the Monstrous Manual gives enough information about the class's abilities in the Bird Maidens' description to run the creatures in a game:

Quote:

Though they have no sorority, bird maidens are loosely united by their faith. All bird maidens are kahina, idol priestesses who believe in the divinity of all things. They live as wandering teachers, protecting the land from those who despoil it. They get along best with those who respect the land: desert riders, mystics, and fisherfolk. In the fertile river valleys, they preach the faith and maintain the fertility of the land and livestock. Some tribesmen believe bird maidens are hama, spirits of the departed, who return to help the living. Bird maidens deny this and may cut themselves to prove that they are flesh and blood.

Bird maidens' Hit Dice are equal to their priestly level, from 2-8. They have major access to the All, Animal, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Plant and Weather spheres and minor access to the Creation, Protection, and Sun spheres. They carry spears, darts, and slings, but may not wear armor or shields (even magical) heavier than hide. If they do, they cannot use spells. Bird maidens cannot turn undead.

Oh, and the bird maiden entry says 8th level Bird Maidens can turn into giant eagles. Does this mean they get a giant eagle's 1-6/1-6/2-12 claw/claw/beak attacks? That would make them a lot more effective.

07-28-2009, 11:47 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Oh yes, there's plenty of potential in transformation tokens.

One of the Dilvish stories used a swanmay-like figure as a framing element:

Quote:

Originally Posted by "**Thelinde's Song**" by Roger Zelazny

"Mildin shuddered and fetched her shimmering were-cloak—for she was Mistress of the Coven—and throwing it about her shoulders and clasping it at her neck with the smoking Stone of the Moon, she became as a silver-gray bird and passed out through the window and high about the Denesh."

She flies from her were-hall to her daughter, who spoke the name of an ancient and powerful sorcerer. Mildin then takes Thelinde within her cloak and they go to the Pool of the Goddess, and while the moon still shines on its surface images come to accompany the witch queen's tale of the first meeting between Dilvish and Jelerak. When her daughter's careless second utterance brings a servant of the Dark One, Mildin makes the Sign of the Moon and abjures the creature in the Name of the Coven and by the Moon their Mother. The cloak begins to glow, and the Stone of the Moon blazes, driving it back.

07-28-2009, 11:51 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Yes, a kahina is a variant priest. I don't see were all this fuss about it being undefined is coming from, since the Monstrous Manual gives enough information about the class's abilities in the Bird Maidens' description to run the creatures in a game

Except it doesn't tell you the type of dice they use for hit dice, their THACO, their spells per day per level or their saving throws. We can probably assume that it's the same as a specialty priest but I maintain the entry should at least say that explicitly!

07-29-2009, 12:14 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Except it doesn't tell you the type of dice they use for hit dice, their THACO, their spells per day per level or their saving throws. We can probably assume that it's the same as a specialty priest but I maintain the entry should at least say that explicitly!

Well it seems pretty clear to me that they are priestesses and hence use the Priest class of an appropriate level to determine those abilities. I don't mind a bit of reading between the lines in cases like this.

07-29-2009, 02:16 AM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yeah, that 50% chance of becoming an NPC is a bit weird. No, player, it is not for you to decide!

I have to assume this was written in the same spirit as the AD&D2E PHB *wish* entry...

Quote:

This discretionary power of the DM is necessary in order to maintain game balance. As wishing another creature dead would be grossly unfair, for example, your DM might well advance the spellcaster to a future period in which the creature is no longer alive, effectively putting the wishing character out of the campaign.

'Cause that's totally not grossly unfair.

07-29-2009, 04:57 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I'm having difficulty coming up with adventure ideas for Swanmays.

There's some totally awesome potential in the bird maidens who are unwillingly married to human(oid)s. If the bird maiden gets back her magic scarf, she *murders her husband and all her sons* and kidnaps her daughters away to become bird maidens themselves. You could have an unwilling bird maiden married to an evil NPC, and she wants freed from her marriage. Or you could have her married to an otherwise good NPC, and she asks the PCs to help recover her scarf. Giving her back the scarf would mean the death of their friendly NPC type: moral dilemma time, there. Or the PCs have to investigate a murder where a wife killed her husband and now is going around killing her (now grown) sons and kidnapping her daughters.

07-29-2009, 05:25 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Or here's a bit from the Wikipedia entry:

Quote:

The folktales usually adhere to the following basic plot. A young, unmarried man steals a magic robe made of swan feathers from a swan maiden so that she will not fly away, and winds up marrying her. Usually she bears his children. When the children are older they sing a song about where their father has hidden their mother's robe, or one asks why the mother always weeps, and finds the cloak for her, or they otherwise betray the secret. The swan maiden immediately gets her robe and disappears to where she came from. Although leaving the children may grieve her, she does not take them with her.

If the husband is able to find her again, it is an arduous quest, and often the impossibility is clear enough that he does not even try.

That husband looking for his lost love seems like a good quest. Or even better is an orphaned child looking for his/her mother: the father died, and as they went through his things the swanmay n=mother finally found her missing cloak and disappeared, leaving a small child behind. What Good aligned PC could pass up that quest?

07-29-2009, 05:49 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

As a thought, swanmays have to be rangers - but one happens if one turns non-good? They stop being rangers, but presumably they don't lose their swanmay powers.

So... one wonders how the sorority would take that.

I also feel that one should be able to use swanmays Ugly Duckling -style, but I'm not certain how.

07-30-2009, 05:37 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

There's some totally awesome potential in the bird maidens who are unwillingly married to human(oid)s. If the bird maiden gets back her magic scarf, she *murders her husband and all her sons* and kidnaps her daughters away to become bird maidens themselves. You could have an unwilling bird maiden married to an evil NPC, and she wants freed from her marriage. Or you could have her married to an otherwise good NPC, and she asks the PCs to help recover her scarf. Giving her back the scarf would mean the death of their friendly NPC type: moral dilemma time, there. Or the PCs have to investigate a murder where a wife killed her husband and now is going around killing her (now grown) sons and kidnapping her daughters.

The Monstrous Manual entry says Bird Maidens in that situation leave their husbands, not kill them, they only murder their sons. It rather reminds me of Euripedes' version of **Medea**. Although I suspect the Bird Maidens don't just kill their sons out of vengeance like Medea did. They can be of any alignment, and I can't see many Good aligned Bird Maidens murdering their own offspring just to torment the man who forced them into marriage. Perhaps there's some supernatural explanation: They may have to kill their sons to return to being Bird Maidens, or perhaps the sons from such a union damages the fertility of the land they hold sacred, or such male offspring may be doomed to become abominable monstrosities that despoil nature.

Although one wonders how Bird Maidens normally reproduce. If they're related to Swanmays, presumably they can recruit human priestesses and initiate them to become Bird Maidens, but are they allowed to bear children willingly? It's possibly they are forbidden from marrying (being "Maidens" after all). If they do have normal relations with men, what do they do with any sons they have? Do they kill them to, or return them to their fathers?

07-30-2009, 05:52 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

As a thought, swanmays have to be rangers - but one happens if one turns non-good? They stop being rangers, but presumably they don't lose their swanmay powers.

So... one wonders how the sorority would take that.

Hmm, maybe they do lose their Swanmay powers, and become cursed to remain in swan form until redeemed? Of course there are stories that the ones who turn really nasty become Black Swanmays who are "anti-rangers" similar to the AD&D anti-paladin is the Evil inversion of a paladin.

Naturally, the swanmay sorority denies such beings exist, but there are enough stories to the contrary to suggest they're not telling the whole truth.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I also feel that one should be able to use swanmays Ugly Duckling -style, but I'm not certain how.

Hmm...

Well maybe some villain captures a Swanmay's token and forces her to bear him children. Both their parents die during an enemy raid, and their daughters are forced to beg for a living, during which time they are tormented by their tribe for being "illegitimate ugly half-breeds", maybe even sold into slavery or servitude. Then another Swanmay seeks the PCs aid in freeing her "sister" and, when finding they are too late, in tracking down and rescuing the "Ugly Ducklings".

07-30-2009, 06:05 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, maybe they do lose their Swanmay powers, and become cursed to remain in swan form until redeemed?

Wait. If the swan breeding population comes almost entirely from two sources, neutral swans and evil swanmays, wouldn't that imply that swans now inherently tend toward evil? I think that *is* what happens when an intelligent, supernatural, evil population is mixed with a mundane neutral one. And, of course, swans are vicious bastards anyway.

I like this idea.

07-30-2009, 07:02 AM

kami2awa

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have real trouble thinking of Swanmays as Good creatures. IRL Swans are extremely nasty, aggressive, dirty and territorial birds who just happen to look nice.

If Swanmays are thought of as Good by most other races, then it may be a total facade, and beneath the snow-white exterior are some ugly things propelling the Swanmay through the world. And Gods help you if you try the 'steal her shawl and enslave its owner' trick on them, as you may get more than your arm broken...

07-30-2009, 07:26 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **kami2awa**

I have real trouble thinking of Swanmays as Good creatures. IRL Swans are extremely nasty, aggressive, dirty and territorial birds who just happen to look nice.

That's increasingly my thinking, too. Swanmays tell everyone that they're the Good protectors of the forest, and many believe them, but they're really pretty horrible if you look past the surface (hence the murdering their husbands and children).

07-30-2009, 09:06 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

That's increasingly my thinking, too. Swanmays tell everyone that they're the Good protectors of the forest, and many believe them, but they're really pretty horrible if you look past the surface (hence the murdering their husbands and children).

Well, remember that they are rangers, and thus have to technically be good (though, being humans, and thus capable of dual-classing, they need not have always been good).

On the other hand, remember that 2e alignments are a bit grittier and more mean-spirited than recently, with lizardmen eating people and being neutral, and swanmays slaughtering poachers and decorating their homes with their remains and technically being good.

07-30-2009, 09:43 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **kami2awa**

I have real trouble thinking of Swanmays as Good creatures. IRL Swans are extremely nasty, aggressive, dirty and territorial birds who just happen to look nice.

Local legend in my hometown has it that a swan once killed somebody's pet dog in the park.

07-30-2009, 11:51 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

That's increasingly my thinking, too. Swanmays tell everyone that they're the Good protectors of the forest, and many believe them, but they're really pretty horrible if you look past the surface (hence the murdering their husbands and children).

She's forced to "marry" and have the children of the man who has her cloak. The children may be innocent, but the husband is the real villain.

07-30-2009, 05:38 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

That's increasingly my thinking, too. Swanmays tell everyone that they're the Good protectors of the forest, and many believe them, but they're really pretty horrible if you look past the surface (hence the murdering their husbands and children).

Just to remind everyone, it's the **Bird Maiden** the Monstrous Manual says murders folk after a forced "marriage", and it says they only murder their sons (if any), not their husbands, There's nothing to indicate Swanmays follow this behavior to, they may just fly away with their daughter(s).

There is one other thing I was curious about. It says "Swanmays are guided by their swan personalities". Real-world swans are known for forming strong pair-bonds with their mates, so I wonder if Swanmays are the same? There's no specific mention of them having mates, but their entry does that "They are friendly with forest folk, such as sylvan elves and dryads." Now there's friendly, and there's *friendly*. Maybe most Swanmays form a lifelong commitment with an Elven lover, or one of the nature priests they are are known to "regularly associate" with. Now if I remember correctly the 1E version of Swanmays could be half-elves as well as humans, perhaps many of the half-elf Swanmays had a Swanmay mother and an elf father?

As for swanmays killing and displaying poachers, I don't think that's out of bounds for a Good character in D&D. Their entry says they "actively oppose evil races or monsters that might otherwise decimate wildlife and the countryside" and there are two other references to them combating Evil, so I suspect the poacher in question is likely to be of the "Chaotic evil half-orc slaughtering sprites for pixie-dust" kind rather than some peasant who trapped a rabbit to eat. Although I can easily see them punishing someone for killing a forest creature they hold in particularly high regard, like a swan, since Swanmays seem to lean toward the Neutral end of the Alignment spectrum.

07-31-2009, 12:18 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Into the Ts now...

Tabaxi

Leopard or Jaguar -people, depending on your preference, who are I suppose very much like Lizardmen, being reclusive, rather 'primitive', and neither evil nor good. They are very loosely reminiscent of something I read about the Zapotec civilisation's beliefs about jaguar people, but that could be one of those apocraphal things.

I must confess to being slightly puzzled as to why Tabaxi are Chaotic Neutral in alignment - they rather seem like the definition of Neutral to me, being reasonably organised (into clan groups) and preferring to keep to themselves. But then again the MM's view of alignment is generally a bit beyond reason.

The plot hook of all plot hooks for Tabaxi is the "ancient civilisation that has collapsed, leaving its former citizens as degenerate tribespeople" motif - familiar to all D&D jungle races. It's a nice motif and one that doesn't really get old, although I think you do have to question the assumptions behind it (at least I do, anyway): why is it always the races who live in the jungle whose civilisations collapse, for white skinned foreigners to discover eons later, and not the other way around?

But you can't have a boring game about exploring lost Tabaxi temples in the depths of the rainforest, I think.

Tabaxi Lord

These are the Lizard King equivalents for the Tabaxi - big Chaotic Evil ruler types who can bend their lesser cousins to their will for fun and hijinks. They are the mortal enemies of the Couatl, and this again strikes me as a good adventure hook for a game - war in the jungle between a Tabaxi Lord and a Couatl, with the player character somehow caught up in it.

07-31-2009, 12:42 PM

Khuxan

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

you do have to question the assumptions behind it (at least I do, anyway): why is it always the races who live in the jungle whose civilisations collapse, for white skinned foreigners to discover eons later, and not the other way around?

Having studied imperialism and colonialism last semester, that does reek of cultural supremacism and anachronistic ideas about race and society. One of my favourite parts of the *Reign* setting is that the Empire and the Dindavarans (the latter being described as 'Black Prussians with katanas') are black and it is the itinerant merchants and mammoth-riding raiders who are white.

The idea of fallen Mesoamerican empires is not particularly accurate, anyway. The Aztecs were at the nexus of their power and advancement when the conquistadors came, and who knows what would have happened given another few centuries.

07-31-2009, 12:56 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Khuxan**

Having studied imperialism and colonialism last semester, that does reek of cultural supremacism and anachronistic ideas about race and society. One of my favourite parts of the *Reign* setting is that the Empire and the Dindavarans (the latter being described as 'Black Prussians with katanas') are black and it is the itinerant merchants and mammoth-riding raiders who are white.

The idea of fallen Mesopotamian empires is not particularly accurate, anyway. The Aztecs were at the nexus of their power and advancement when the conquistadors came, and who knows what would have happened given another few centuries.

I suspect it comes from the stories about the Maya and the collapse of their high civilisation, which if I recall happened around the 9th-10th centuries AD? So when the Europeans arrived in the Yucatan many of the Maya cities would already have looked like something out of Indiana Jones.

By the way I think you mean "Mesoamerican" rather than "Mesopotamian". ;)

07-31-2009, 01:49 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I suspect it comes from the stories about the Maya and the collapse of their high civilisation, which if I recall happened around the 9th-10th centuries AD? So when the Europeans arrived in the Yucatan many of the Maya cities would already have looked like something out of Indiana Jones.

Or Olmec. Giant stone cat heads!

07-31-2009, 03:46 PM

JohnBiles

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Into the Ts now...

Tabaxi

The plot hook of all plot hooks for Tabaxi is the "ancient civilisation that has collapsed, leaving its former citizens as degenerate tribespeople" motif - familiar to all D&D jungle races. It's a nice motif and one that doesn't really get old, although I think you do have to question the assumptions behind it (at least I do, anyway): why is it always the races who live in the jungle whose civilisations collapse, for white skinned foreigners to discover eons later, and not the other way around?

Ecology, baby, ecology.

Jungle soil is fertile but not deep or long-lasting. The first stage of agriculture in a jungle or forest is slash-and-burn. You burn the jungle / forest and the ash helps to fertilize the land. You farm it a few years, then move on and let it heal, doing the whole thing over again at another place.

However, with time, you can learn tricks to extend the lifespan of the land, enabling you to build permanent cities and till fields around them long term. But it's always an unstable position because what nature wants is to

bury your farms and cities with verdant greenery that is sustainable long-term, rather than your farms and cities that destroy the high level cover which had made jungle growth work properly.

Once something goes wrong, either eco-catastrophe will wipe out the land's fertility and you'll have to flee or you slaughter each other too much when population outstrips the land's fertility or whatever.

The jungle then rolls in and devours your civilization and the survivors revert to a simpler lifestyle.

Jungle/Thick forest is harder to settle and till than the more open areas, so it's more likely ruins will be left lying around instead of someone building a new city on the site.

When a city is ruined by the collapse of civilization in the plains, people will eventually build a new city there or else steal all the bits to build new cities or earthquakes will bury it, etc.

07-31-2009, 07:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tabaxi

I must confess to being slightly puzzled as to why Tabaxi are Chaotic Neutral in alignment - they rather seem like the definition of Neutral to me, being reasonably organised (into clan groups) and preferring to keep to themselves. But then again the MM's view of alignment is generally a bit beyond reason.

'Cause they're cats, and cats don't like to obey the rules. They're free spirits, man!)

By the way, am I the only one who thinks the illustration of a female Tabaxi is quite cute, albeit in a comic-book supervillainess ("Fear the claws of Jaguargirl") kind of way.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The plot hook of all plot hooks for Tabaxi is the "ancient civilisation that has collapsed, leaving its former citizens as degenerate tribespeople" motif - familiar to all D&D jungle races. It's a nice motif and one that doesn't really get old, although I think you do have to question the assumptions behind it (at least I do, anyway): why is it always the races who live in the jungle whose civilisations collapse, for white skinned foreigners to discover eons later, and not the other way around?

In counterargument, there are just as many fallen civilizations in non-jungle lands, but far fewer of them are lost because there aren't jungle trees to hide them? If the Ruined Walls of Olde Karpesh are plain to see in the middle of the valley, and are probably still in use by successor civilizations, people are a lot less likely to forget about them.

Then again, there is a great lost civilization in Western lands, whose people are forgotten and whose awesome works are known to few. Where do you think all those dungeons come from? They're relics of the Ancient Empire of Evil Gnomes, don't you know?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

But you can't have a boring game about exploring lost Tabaxi temples in the depths of the rainforest, I think.

Another interesting titbit is "Tabaxi are sometimes hunted for their pelts, worth up to 250 gp each". There's an adventure seed in there, without a doubt. Its startling how many non-evil sapient races in the Monstrous Manual have notes on their salable body-parts.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Tabaxi Lord

These are the Lizard King equivalents for the Tabaxi - big Chaotic Evil ruler types who can bend their lesser cousins to their will for fun and hijinks. They are the mortal enemies of the Couatl, and this again strikes me as a good adventure hook for a game - war in the jungle between a Tabaxi Lord and a Couatl, with the player character somehow caught up in it.

What is it with this "Neutral race of primitives dominated by a more powerful Chaotic Evil version". Is it part of Demonic plot to take over the scaled and furred tribes of the swamps and jungle? The Tabaxi Lord can mate with Tabaxis, and all his offspring are more Tabaxi Lords. If these creatures are highly libidinous then within a few generations the jungles could be packed with these malicious creatures. Maybe most Tabaxi tribes drive them out or slay them, or the Couatl are successful in keeping their numbers down. The Couatl may even be revered by some tribes of Tabaxi as representatives of the "powers related to sunlight, rain, or animals" that they revere.

07-31-2009, 07:24 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JohnBiles**
Ecology, baby, ecology.

Jungle soil is fertile but not deep or long-lasting. The first stage of agriculture in a jungle or forest is slash-and-burn. You burn the jungle / forest and the ash helps to fertilize the land. You farm it a few years, then move on and let it heal, doing the whole thing over again at another place.

Tabaxis are carnivores, they wouldn't be able to eat ordinary crops. Unless they developed some form of "meat plant", a Tabaxi civilisation would have to be based on some form of animal husbandry. Maybe they were reliant on one animal (A giant mouse, jungle cricket, river carp or whatever) and when some illness or environmental change caused a drop in their food-animal, their civilisation collapsed.

07-31-2009, 09:01 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The plot hook of all plot hooks for Tabaxi is the "ancient civilisation that has collapsed, leaving its former citizens as degenerate tribespeople" motif - familiar to all D&D jungle races. It's a nice motif and one that doesn't really get old, although I think you do have to question the assumptions behind it (at least I do, anyway): why is it always the races who live in the jungle whose civilisations collapse, for white skinned foreigners to discover eons later, and not the other way around?

Because if a fallen empire is located in temperate climes (where the natives have pale skin) it'll be modelled on Rome, not the Maya. More a failure of imagination than a case of "colonialist" assumptions, I'd think.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I suspect it comes from the stories about the Maya and the collapse of their high civilisation, which if I recall happened around the 9th-10th centuries AD? So when the Europeans arrived in the Yucatan many of the Maya cities would already have looked like something out of Indiana Jones.

The collapse of *one of* their high civilizations. The Spaniard's first contact with the Maya was in the northern Yucatan, where an urban civilization was still in existence (and resisted the conquistadores with rather more vigour than the Aztecs managed). The archetypical "lost Maya" were the Classic* Maya civilization of the southern Yucatan, which indeed collapsed in the 9th century. There was also advanced Maya states in the southern highlands and down to the Pacific litoral that lasted until the Spanish conquest (only completed in this region in the 17th century IIRC).

Just to confuse you, the perhaps most famous Maya centre, Chichén Itzá, was in the northern region, where urbanism persisted to the Spanish arrival, but the city itself was abandoned long before the consistadores came.

* In Mesoamerican chronology, the "Classic" is approximately the 3rd to 9th centuries AD.

07-31-2009, 09:23 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

Because if a fallen empire is located in temperate climes (where the natives have pale skin) it'll be modelled on Rome, not the Maya. More a failure of imagination than a case of "colonialist" assumptions, I'd think.

You're probably right.

Quote:

The collapse of *one of* their high civilizations. The Spaniard's first contact with the Maya was in the northern Yucatan, where an urban civilization was still in existence (and resisted the conquistadores with rather more vigour than the Aztecs managed). The archetypical "lost Maya" were the Classic* Maya civilization of the southern Yucatan, which indeed collapsed in the 9th century. There was also advanced Maya states in the southern highlands and down to the Pacific litoral that lasted until the Spanish conquest (only completed in this region in the 17th century IIRC).

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* In Mesoamerican chronology, the "Classic" is approximately the 3rd to 9th centuries AD.

I did read about all that in Jarred Diamond's book *Collapse*.

The vigor of the Maya resistance to Spanish conquest was surely down to lack of centralised power (the Spanish had to fight each city-state one by one) and a lack of native subject states desperate to do over the main empire, which is really what did for the Aztecs. (Along with all the smallpox of course.)

07-31-2009, 10:22 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

What is it with this "Neutral race of primitives dominated by a more powerful Chaotic Evil version". Is it part of Demonic plot to take over the scaled and furred tribes of the swamps and jungle? The Tabaxi Lord can mate with Tabaxis, and all his offspring are more Tabaxi Lords. If these creatures are highly libidinous then within a few generations the jungles could be packed with these malicious creatures. Maybe most Tabaxi tribes drive them out or slay them, or the Couatl are successful in keeping their numbers down. The Couatl may even be revered by some tribes of Tabaxi as representatives of the "powers related to sunlight, rain, or animals" that they revere.

Somewhat disturbingly, note that Tabaxi Lords are *not* humanoid, and are considerably larger than your average Tabaxi - they're twice the size of a normal jaguar, for example. I suspect that Tabaxi aren't too keen on Tabaxi Lord breeding duty.

Also interesting is that Tabaxi come in two types - leopard and jaguar. That seems, to me, to encourage both African and Mesoamerican -style cultures, making them one of the few multicultural races. Also, I am reminded of how leopards hide their kills in trees to protect them from hyenas - one could have an intriguing Tabaxi-Gnoll war or rivalry.

I'd never noticed how many jungle creatures are in the book - Couatl, Jungle Giants, Black Dragons, Grippli, Kirre, Tabaxi, etc.

07-31-2009, 11:24 PM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

By the way, am I the only one who thinks the illustration of a female Tabaxi is quite cute, albeit in a comic-book supervillainess ("Fear the claws of Jaguargirl") kind of way.

Y'know, the more I look at this, the more something makes sense... the reason both Lizardmen and Tabaxi have great CE versions of themselves? Because Tabaxi are really lizards!

Do you see any nipples on that so-called cat woman? No!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Tabaxis are carnivores, they wouldn't be able to eat ordinary crops. Unless they developed some form of "meat plant", a Tabaxi civilisation would have to be based on some form of animal husbandry. Maybe they were reliant on one animal (A giant mouse, jungle cricket, river carp or whatever) and when some illness or environmental change caused a drop in their food-animal, their civilisation collapsed.

Guinea pigs!

08-01-2009, 12:28 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Tabaxis are carnivores, they wouldn't be able to eat ordinary crops. Unless they developed some form of "meat plant", a Tabaxi civilisation would have to be based on some form of animal husbandry. Maybe they were reliant on one animal (A giant mouse, jungle cricket, river carp or whatever) and when some illness or environmental change caused a drop in their food-animal, their civilisation collapsed.

Maybe they tilled the soil to feed their food animals. Herding probably doesn't work very well in the dense jungle.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ginkomortus**

Y'know, the more I look at this, the more something makes sense... the reason both Lizardmen and Tabaxi have great CE versions of themselves? Because Tabaxi are really lizards!

There are some other options. Jaguars are an interesting species. They're generally considered the third largest of the big cats, but while leopards vary little in size, jaguars get bigger the further south you go. The Mexican ones may be smaller than a leopard, but the Brazilian males are commonly as big as a small lion, an increase in mass by a factor of three or four. At least for the Mesoamerican variety, the tabaxi lords may be intruders or interlopers. Huge sports from a greater race further into the jungle.

The other alternative is cultural. Again going Mesoamerican, ritual sacrifice and bloodletting has been a significant part of the pre-Columbian cultures going back to the Olmec (just like that popular ball game). Whatever modern cultural relativism believes, D&D alignment has always been very black and white. Humanoid sacrifice is evil, period. Perhaps those who perform these rituals are rewarded by the evil gods, the smoking mirrors of the jungles (which explains the rivalry with the feathered serpents). The tabaxi priests are granted magical power, but also physical power. They grow to enormous size. They wear their robes, stand on the tops of the ziggurats with blood dripping from their claws, and lead the rituals that prepare the tribes for war.

08-01-2009, 12:59 AM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

What is it with this "Neutral race of primitives dominated by a more powerful Chaotic Evil version". Is it part of Demonic plot to take over the scaled and furred tribes of the swamps and jungle? The Tabaxi Lord can mate with Tabaxis, and all his offspring are more Tabaxi Lords. If these creatures are highly libidinous then within a few generations the jungles could be packed with these malicious creatures. Maybe most Tabaxi tribes drive them out or slay them, or the Couatl are successful in keeping their numbers down. The Couatl may even be revered by some tribes of Tabaxi as representatives of the "powers related to sunlight, rain, or animals" that they revere.

Or maybe -- changing some of the MC text -- the Tabaxi aren't the original species, but rather the result of the Tabaxi Lord's insatiable cross-species breeding with captured humanoids. Tabaxi Lords are pure predators; they

prowl the dark jungle evenings for fresh meat and blood, they stalk, they devour, and they revel in the kill. But why do they seem to center their activities around the ruins of ancient civilizations when there's game everywhere? Because ruins attract adventuring parties. In addition to the joy of hunting and killing an exotic and worthy foe, these parties supply prey of a different kind. This.. breeding stock is caught in traps constructed by the Lords' Tabaxi slaves, the men are torn apart and eaten, but the women face a far grimmer fate.

The offspring from these horrible pairings become Tabaxi who, brought up by the Lords, become another generation of cowering slaves dedicated to keeping their Lords in meat and heirs. If only some band of missionary adventurers would come along and teach the Tabaxi about rebellion, and show them how dependent the Lords are on them for their very survival..

EDIT: In my original conception of this idea, I'd assumed that Tabaxi are sterile among themselves, only producing children when mating with Tabaxi Lords (just as in the original text's description). However, this means that if some do-gooding adventurers come in and rescue them from their cruel overlords, they will become extinct within a generation. So what do the do-gooders do? Which is more evil: to wipe out a whole neutral species, or to allow their cruel cycle of reproduction to continue forever more? This is getting darker than most AD&D campaigns would be willing to do, I think.

08-01-2009, 02:55 AM

JohnBiles

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Tabaxis are carnivores, they wouldn't be able to eat ordinary crops. Unless they developed some form of "meat plant", a Tabaxi civilisation would have to be based on some form of animal husbandry. Maybe they were reliant on one animal (A giant mouse, jungle cricket, river carp or whatever) and when some illness or environmental change caused a drop in their food-animal, their civilisation collapsed.

jungles are very poor for animal husbandry. So this would have likely meant their civilization would have been riding the ragged edge of potential disaster and been even more prone to eco disaster.

I suppose fishing would probably be the easiest source of large amounts of meat for them.

08-01-2009, 03:26 AM

Kapten

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I read in a magazine some years ago that you can breed leguans in jungle and get something like 10 times the meat of cattle in the same area. That could be a way to get meat out of the jungle.

08-01-2009, 05:42 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ginkomortus**

Y'know, the more I look at this, the more something makes sense... the reason both Lizardmen and Tabaxi have great CE versions of themselves? Because Tabaxi are really lizards!

Do you see any nipples on that so-called cat woman? No!

Nah, Tabaxi can't be lizards. Don't you see those mammaries? The non-visible nipples doesn't prove a thing. I've met a lot of housecats in my time, and you can't see their nipples either, since they're covered in fur.

Now let's see, what D&D creatures can have fur and/or scales... Hmm, there are several Oriental Dragons that have both those traits. That explains it then, Tabaxi and Lizardmen are both a kind of Dragon-man! :o

It just shows that 4E wasn't being original by giving female dragonborn breasts. :p;)

08-01-2009, 05:50 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kapten**

I read in a magazine some years ago that you can breed leguans in jungle and get something like 10 times the meat of cattle in the same area. That could be a way to get meat out of the jungle.

What's a "leguan"? You didn't mean to type iguanas, by any chance?

08-01-2009, 06:01 AM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

What's a "leguan"? You didn't mean to type iguanas, by any chance?

"Leguan" is the Swedish word for iguana.

08-01-2009, 06:41 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Presumably both the leopard and jaguar forms of Tabaxi originate from the same source, they even have the same name for themselves, although they pronounce it differently. Maybe they were once humans, who were transformed into catfolk by the worship of a feline deity (either Leopard or Jaguar, depending upon which was the big cheese in the local jungle)? Perhaps their civilization collapsed *because* they turned from human into Tabaxi, since they could no longer subsist off agriculture? The images of jaguar-men in those old Tabaxi ruins may represent humans dressed as jaguar-warriors, divine spirits and the rare, and highly revered were-jaguars or were-leopards who were considered to have a paw in both worlds?

Now the D&D version of the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca is an obvious possibility. Not only is the god Chaotic Evil in D&D, like the Tabaxi Lords, his animal was the jaguar and he was associated with "**Jaguar Warriors**". The Tabaxi could have turned away from his worship after their civilization collapsed and they reverted to being simple hunters and fishermen. Texcatlipoca was a god propitiated by sacrifice, human and otherwise, and the fallen Tabaxi may simply have lacked the population or military strength to obtain the human lives he demanded.

Which reminds me, there was an old issue of Dragon with a scenario about an Aztec-esque culture which included werejaguars as elite warriors. This wasn't the Forgotten Realm's Maztica. The scenario was a "Special Attraction" in Dragon magazine #70 called Mechica, and the werejaguars were a new monster.

Alternatively, there were secret societies of "leopard men" in Africa, an AD&D version of which could also be the original source of the Tabaxi, or at least the "Ta-BAX-ee" leopard version of them. In real life these leopard-cults were likely a lot less

bloodthirsty than the sensationalist tales about them would indicate, but a fantasy riff of them could easily be the source of the CE Tabaxi lords and/or wereleopards, which then diminish into regular Tabaxi.

08-02-2009, 09:58 AM

Strangething

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kapten**

I read in a magazine some years ago that you can breed leguans in jungle and get something like 10 times the meat of cattle in the same area. That could be a way to get meat out of the jungle.

Now I am picturing a tabaxi / lizardman war. So there's the human(oid) sacrifice angle, too.

Didn't some 3e sourcebook reimagine the lizard king as a type of fiendish lizardfolk? There's another explanation for the tabaxi lords.

(My three-ring-binder MM doesn't have the Tabaxi. :-{ It skips from Sylph to Tarrasque.)

08-02-2009, 12:45 PM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Iguanas, yes -- good food source for jungle cultures. Insect farming might be useful; insects are very protein rich. Also, insects can be raised in small areas - each hut could have its own insect-raising area. Preferably some type of insect that feeds on detritus -- big jungle cockroaches? (Gross to us, but there's no reason a tabaxi would think the same way.)

And this assumes that tabaxi are true felines, though anthropomorphic. They could just as well be cat-mimicking primates (derived from one of the long-tailed monkeys, like a spider monkey) as primate-mimicking cats. (Also, the cat-form is pretty effective and has been developed independently; there were marsupial 'saber-toothed cats' in South America. The tabaxi could be marsupial cats.) True felines *do* require a meat diet, but other mammal carnivores don't necessarily - dogs can live on plant-derived dog food for example. So marsupial-tabaxi or monkey-tabaxi might be able to live mostly by agriculture...

Re powerful Chaotic Evil versions of jungle races: perhaps this is a relic of some powerful ancient CE deity, demon-lord, or Lovecraftian-type alien-god with influence over jungles. (That yuan-ti patron deity/demon whose name I can't remember, maybe.)

Also, jungles are a *great* place for Chaotic Evil to spread its influence. Before the development of modern medicine, people not native to the jungles very rarely went into them -- too many diseases. Lawful Evil might be accepted by Lawful Neutral or Neutral societies, since it's less likely to disrupt the status quo; but nobody gets along with Chaotic Evil (not even other Chaotic Evil, usually). So it's best for them to build their forces in remote, hostile regions ignored by the temperate zone civilizations ... until they can pour into those lands with immense armies.

Maybe Tabaxi Lords are larger for nutritional reasons -- in lean times, normal Tabaxi go hungry, and their children's growth is stunted. Tabaxi Lords eat the normal Tabaxi instead, and feed their children better. (The size difference is too big for this to be the *only* reason, unless tabaxi have really weird growth patterns - but it might be a factor, reinforcing a pre-existing advantage in size and strength due to the Lords' ability to kill and eat other Tabaxi and to rule by fear, taking the best food.)

08-02-2009, 07:29 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

Maybe Tabaxi Lords are larger for nutritional reasons -- in lean times, normal Tabaxi go hungry, and their children's growth is stunted. Tabaxi Lords eat the normal Tabaxi instead, and feed their children better. (The size difference is too big for this to be the **only** reason, unless tabaxi have really weird growth patterns - but it might be a factor, reinforcing a pre-existing advantage in size and strength due to the Lords' ability to kill and eat other Tabaxi and to rule by fear, taking the best food.)

Unlike lizards and crocodiles, most mammals stop growing when they reach maturity. But not *all*... elephants, for example, follow the more typically saurian grow pattern of rapid growth until maturity, and then slow growth for the rest of their lives. That huge skeleton mounted in the rotunda of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington is from an animal that weighed 13 tons when alive, roughly twice the weight of a typical full-grown bull. Maybe the tabaxi lords are *ancient*. The almost immortal survivors of that long-fallen civilization. So long ago that even with their longevity whiskers are turning white, and backs are streaked with silver. These primordials have grown immense over the centuries, while their minds have become stolid and intractable. This physical superiority and their natural contempt for their feral and uncivilized descendants has prompted them to take on the role of god-kings, as they dream of past glories while wallowing in all the squalid grandeur their degenerate children can muster.

Or perhaps, in order to ensure their continued dominance, the alpha cat (tabaxi lord) simply keeps the rest of the tribe on the verge of starvation while gorging itself on protein. This stunts the growth of the dominated tabaxi at a pre-pubescent levels, and makes their twice-tall lord appear *huge* compared to the rest of the tribe. Even ignoring the height differential, the alpha is simply stronger and healthier. Stocky, heavy muscled. Powerful, broad. Like a jaguar. In contrast to a typical member of the tribe, who are all skin and bones, with ribs, patchy hair, and semi-atrophied muscles. Now imagine the stir caused in the jungles circles when a whole *tribe* of the so-called "lords" appear. The lords of the scrawny tribes are in a panic as the fringes of their scattered society are threatened by a simple egalitarian ethos.

08-02-2009, 09:43 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

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Oh yes, there are all kinds of possibilities, especially considering the supernaturally efficient metabolisms some D&D critters seem to have. Giant beetles or fish? No, I've got it - Giant Crawdads. My cats have always loved shrimp.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

And this assumes that tabaxi are true felines, though anthropomorphic. They could just as well be cat-mimicking primates (derived from one of the long-tailed monkeys, like a spider monkey) as primate-mimicking cats. (Also, the cat-form is pretty effective and has been developed independently; there were marsupial 'saber-toothed cats' in South America. The tabaxi could be marsupial cats.) True felines **do** require a meat diet, but other mammal carnivores don't necessarily - dogs can live on plant-derived dog food for example. So marsupial-tabaxi or monkey-tabaxi might be able to live mostly by agriculture...

Well firstly, I said 2E Tabaxi are carnivores because their Monstrous Manual entry says Diet: Carnivorous, not because of their feline traits. The 2E MM entry for Dogs, incidentally, lists them as Omnivorous, except for the carnivorous Death Dog.

Secondly, the Tabaxi are not built like cats - they're bipeds with hands, for a start. If anything, they're more like primate-mimicking felines than vica versa.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

Maybe Tabaxi Lords are larger for nutritional reasons -- in lean times, normal Tabaxi go hungry, and their children's growth is stunted. Tabaxi Lords eat the normal Tabaxi instead, and feed their children better. (The size difference is too big for this to be the *only* reason, unless tabaxi have really weird growth patterns - but it might be a factor, reinforcing a pre-existing advantage in size and strength due to the Lords' ability to kill and eat other Tabaxi and to rule by fear, taking the best food.)

I'm leaning towards some kind of demonic ancestry, since it would explain the innate magical powers. The Tabaxi Lords' spellcasting could be something they learn. I do like the idea that at least part of their greater size is due to a better diet, although the MM also says that Tabaxi Lords are often solitary, and those loners obviously would not have a tribe to feed off.

I know what! Maybe Tabaxi Lords are like cuckoos. They're really a different species that parasitises Tabaxi. When they 'mate' they are actually infesting some unfortunate female with their own egg, and the young Tabaxi Lord is somehow able to trick the Tabaxi tribe into raising it to adulthood, maybe through some kind of charm power that fades away when the cub reaches maturity. Then, some the Tabaxi Lords stay to rule over the tribe, but most are driven into the jungle where they seek out more Tabaxi females to repeat their reproductive cycle.

Lizard Kings and Barghests could be the same kind of creature, but just exploit Lizardmen and Goblins instead.

08-03-2009, 05:11 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well firstly, I said 2E Tabaxi are carnivores because their Monstrous Manual entry says Diet: Carnivorous, not because of their feline traits. The 2E MM entry for Dogs, incidentally, lists them as Omnivorous, except for the carnivorous Death Dog.

Oh, OK. My main point was that 'carnivorous' doesn't usually mean 'can ONLY eat meat', just that it's their main food. The purest carnivores I can think of are non-mammalian - things like birds of prey, snakes, and alligators.

Quote:

I know what! Maybe Tabaxi Lords are like cuckoos. They're really a different species that parasitises Tabaxi. When they 'mate' they are actually infesting some unfortunate female with their own egg, and the young Tabaxi Lord is somehow able to trick the Tabaxi tribe into raising it to adulthood, maybe through some kind of charm power that fades away when the cub reaches maturity. Then, some the Tabaxi Lords stay to rule over the tribe, but most are driven into the jungle where they seek out more Tabaxi females to repeat their reproductive cycle.

Awesome idea.

08-03-2009, 05:42 AM

Kapten

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

What is it with this "Neutral race of primitives dominated by a more powerful Chaotic Evil version".
Is it part of Demonic plot to take over the scaled and furred tribes of the swamps and jungle?

I think it basically has to do with making it easier to have Neutral creatures as opponents. With a CE leader, it comes naturally to the Neutrals to fight PCs.

08-03-2009, 06:35 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kapten**

I think it basically has to do with making it easier to have Neutral creatures as opponents. With a CE leader, it comes naturally to the Neutrals to fight PCs.

Because otherwise everyone gets bonus-versus-evil weapons, and we can't have the PCs getting all those bonuses can we?

08-04-2009, 01:54 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Tako

"LA is a hell of a place to go get yourself a taco..." Oh wait, not that kind of taco. The one with a 'k' and eight legs.

Tako are a weird concept - intelligent octopi who can move about on land and for some reason have a *single eye in the middle of their foreheads*. They are a little bit pseudo-Japanese-ish in flavour; for one thing there's the name (Japanese for 'octopus', though also for 'kite'), and for another there's the whole "Honourable Lawful Neutral types who will avenge any slight" shtick.

There are quite a number of titbits that arouse comment:

- Tako have a glorious movement of 3, which almost makes you wonder why they bother coming on land at all. If a dwarf can run circles around you, you really are better off staying in the sea, I think. Still, at least they're not as bad as the merfolk with their movement of 1.
- The things can have up to 7 attacks, by weapon, which is pretty impressive for a 270 XP monster. They may be slow, but you'd better not get cornered by one.
- "Tako have their own language based on tentacle movements and skin-color changes. Characters with an Intelligence of at least 17 (or with the reading/writing proficiency) have a 25% chance of understanding the tako's language." Ridiculous. Reading/writing proficiency (presumably in 'common') allows interpretation of Tako tentacle language. Absurd.
- Tako tentacles have a strength of 18/00. That's as strong as a Pit Fiend in 2e. Just though it was worth noting.
- Tako are Lawful Neutral, so they can be by turns villains (avenging slights), neutrals (keeping to themselves) or allies (helping fight evil underwater races) in a game. Their ink is also useful for writing with - perhaps a nice little sideline available there for an unscrupulous PC.

Anyway, I like them, because there is something scary about cephalopods that even years of cliché can't quite diminish. Like the kraken dragging ships beneath the waves, implacable and inscrutable tentacled cyclopiian samurai sound nicely alien and horrid. Another example of why D&D campaigns need more water-based adventuring.

08-04-2009, 02:02 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tako have a glorious movement of 3, which almost makes you wonder why they bother coming on land at all. If a dwarf can run circles around you, you really are better off staying in the sea, I think. Still, at least they're not as bad as the merfolk with their movement of 1.

In real life, octopi generally move pretty slowly when they're not blurring toward you with murder in their eyes. Give them an ability that provides for short bursts of very fast speed, and I'd be on board with this.

08-04-2009, 05:17 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I had totally forgotten about tako, which is weird, because I loved them when I was a wee one. I was always highly cephalopod-oriented, even at that tender age. They strike me as perfect for amphibious games, ones that take place at the water's edge. They should totally be trading partners or colonial rivals of the crabmen.

08-04-2009, 05:24 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tako

There are quite a number of titbits that arouse comment:

- Tako have a glorious movement of 3, which almost makes you wonder why they bother coming on land at all. If a dwarf can run circles around you, you really are better off staying in the sea, I think. Still, at least they're not as bad as the merfolk with their movement of 1.
- The things can have up to 7 attacks, by weapon, which is pretty impressive for a 270 XP monster. They may be slow, but you'd better not get cornered by one.
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- Tako tentacles have a strength of ~~18~~00. That's as strong as a Pit Fiend in 2e. Just though it was worth noting.

Hmm, regarding points the last two points. One way the "Understanding Tako" bit would make sense is if the tentacle language is based on Common. So, a Tako telling you to get lost will turn an angry red and twist its tentacles to spell out "Go" in the Common alphabet. The difficulty may just be it's hard for humans to read its signs, since it spells words out so fast and fluidly, often flashing letters in strange forms with multiple tentacles at once. Or, Takos may have some understanding of human language and the 25% is if a Tako is trying to tell you something.

Overall, it would probably be easier if the Tako just writes down what it wants to say in Common. Perhaps there are Tako "scribes" who act as interpreters.

Oh and the ~~18~~00 strength is just for the Tako's grip (e.g. it's very hard to escape from their grappling). They don't get strength or damage bonuses to weapons from this Strength. Which is just as well, considering their 7 attacks per round.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tako are Lawful Neutral, so they can be by turns villains (avenging slights), neutrals (keeping to themselves) or allies (helping fight evil underwater races) in a game. Their ink is also useful for writing with - perhaps a nice little sideline available there for an unscrupulous PC.

Anyway, I like them, because there is something scary about cephalopods that even years of cliché can't quite diminish. Like the kraken dragging ships beneath the waves, implacable and inscrutable tentacled cyclopiian samurai sound nicely alien and horrid. Another example of why D&D campaigns need more water-based adventuring.

Yes, they're a nice monster I never used as much as I would have liked to. I can only remember them turning up in a significant way in one published adventure I've seen - where a Tako child has wandered onto land and Tako warbands are combing the countryside looking for it. It was a scenario in an oldish Dungeon magazine, if I remember aright.

08-04-2009, 05:24 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssi**

In real life, octopi generally move pretty slowly when they're not blurring toward you with murder in their eyes. Give them an ability that provides for short bursts of very fast speed, and I'd be on board with this.

Jet Tako!

08-04-2009, 08:27 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

What setting are they from?

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

What setting are they from?

Kara-Tur, if I remember correctly.

Although the land-walking weapon-wielding Cephalopod has a an older pedigree in RPGs. I can remember octopus-monsters similar to Takos seeing print in The Fantasy Trip and Bushido role-playing games. Except those versions had the conventional binocular eyes, and didn't have separate stats for male and female.

08-05-2009, 12:41 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kapten**

I think it basically has to do with making it easier to have Neutral creatures as opponents. With a CE leader, it comes naturally to the Neutrals to fight PCs.

Pretty much this, yes. And since 2e didn't handle levels on monster races, you ended up with lizard kings, flind and tabaxi lords, all of whom are evil boss-monster versions of the base races.

And now I'm thinking of a tropical campaign setting, with tabaxi and gnolls and lizardmen and bullywugs and maybe aarakocra as the non-human races, instead of elves, dwarves and orcs...

08-05-2009, 04:44 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tako[*]Tako tentacles have a strength of 18/00. That's as strong as a Pit Fiend in 2e. Just though it was worth noting.

Well, octopi are pretty strong - 18/00 doesn't seem totally ludicrous for one that size. (Though I always thought the assigned Strengths for fiends, humanoid monsters, etc. were a little wonky in 2e. That's probably because 1 point, especially in the 17+ range, was a lot more significant than in 3.x.)

08-05-2009, 05:41 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

Well, octopi are pretty strong - 18/00 doesn't seem totally ludicrous for one that size. (Though I always thought the assigned Strengths for fiends, humanoid monsters, etc. were a little wonky in 2e. That's probably because 1 point, especially in the 17+ range, was a lot more significant than in 3.x.)

The original 1E MM was fairly consistent, but there was subtle power creep as the edition progressed (compare the MM2 giants with their MM1 counterparts). 2E inherited and magnified this with inconsistent power upgrades. Dragons and demons were only the more prominent; a lot of humanoid monsters also got strength bonuses to damage, though this is very spotty.

08-05-2009, 10:58 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Although the land-walking weapon-wielding Cephalopod has a an older pedigree in RPGs. I can remember octopus-monsters similar to Takos seeing print in The Fantasy Trip and Bushido role-playing games. Except those versions had the conventional binocular eyes, and didn't have separate stats for male and female.

They're from Japanese folklore... "bake-tako" I seem to recall. Although Google helpfully corrects that to "taco bake", which is of no help whatsoever.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, regarding points the last two points. One way the "Understanding Tako" bit would make sense is if the tentacle language is based on Common. So, a Tako telling you to get lost will turn an angry red and twist its tentacles to spell out "Go" in the Common alphabet. The difficulty may just be is it's hard for humans to read its signs, since it spells words out so fast and fluidly, often flashing letters in strange forms with multiple tentacles at once. Or, Takos may have some understanding of human language and the 25% is if a Tako is trying to tell you something.

Overall, it would probably be easier if the Tako just writes down what it wants to say in Common. Perhaps there are Tako "scribes" who act as interpreters.

I suspect that they're really Vermicious Knids... in octopus suits.

08-05-2009, 05:44 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

I suspect that they're really Vermicious Knids... in octopus suits.

Nah, there's no way Vermicious Knids are Lawful Neutral. Although Knids in octopus suits could stand in for the Tako's "evil boss-monster" à la the Tabaxi Lord. :o

08-05-2009, 08:50 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

They're from Japanese folklore... "bake-tako" I seem to recall. Although Google helpfully corrects that to "taco bake", which is of no help whatsoever.

"Monster octopus." Ah, those wily Japanese and their creative names.

08-06-2009, 12:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

They're from Japanese folklore... "bake-tako" I seem to recall. Although Google helpfully corrects that to "taco bake", which is of no help whatsoever.

If I remember correctly, the landwalking octopus in Bushido was called a "Tako" as well, which just means "octopus" in Japanese. However, they had the **conventional two eyes**, unlike the Cyclopean AD&D version. I've seen a few Japanese pictures and cartoons with monstrous octopodes, but I can't remember ever seeing a one-eyed version of the Tako, or one when the males and females are so different, so I'm wondering if this is something they made up for the Monstrous Manual or whether it has any mythological basis.

There are other Japanese monsters with a single eye, so it's quite possible there's a tradition of Cyclopean Goblin Takos out there but I've just never come across it.

08-07-2009, 05:49 AM

rex monday

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Man, I really love the concept of semi-aquatic octosamurai with a revenge fetish, but I'll be damned if I don't crack up every time I read that name out loud. Juvenile, I know, but it's a deal breaker.

08-07-2009, 08:32 AM

DanSolo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I for one am not the slightest surprised they have 18/00 strength. They have no bones forchrissakes and they walk around no problem.

08-08-2009, 02:32 AM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yes, but can they find Thay on a map?

08-12-2009, 07:48 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, Wiki Answers says;

In Ancient Times the Octopus symbolized the water demon and the enemy of life.

But the only other source I can find discusses the whole Hentai subculture (tentacles?) Risking my sanity, I ventured in (no illustrations, thankfully) and found;

The Japanese UMI BOZU is a huge sea ghost who haunts Japanese sailors. It is bald and has enormous, terrifying eyes.

I think an octopus with an afro would be scarier myself, or with practically any type of hair.

And this <http://www.orientationsgallery.com/Other/brushpot.htm>, well, words can't do it justice, but I feel an urge to use these guys as a travelling justice court in the badlands of my campaign...

08-14-2009, 12:44 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**
Well, Wiki Answers says;

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And this <http://www.orientationsgallery.com/Other/brushpot.htm>, well, words can't do it justice, but I feel an urge to use these guys as a travelling justice court in the badlands of my campaign...

Umi Bozu isn't a variety of monster octopus, I don't think. A bozu is a buddhist priest, and umi just means "sea", so I'm envisaging a kind of ghostly ocean-dwelling giant monk with huge eyes.

I'll get on with the entries later today, sorry for the delay.

08-15-2009, 11:19 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Tanar'ri

As with the Baatezu and Yuguloth entries in the MM, it's difficult to know what to make of the Tanar'ri. Only two types are detailed (Balor and Marilith) and they are worth a whopping 46,000 and 45,000 XP each; no wonder Planescape had the image of being "too high level for my blood" - it was all down to the messed up XP amounts in the MM! The XP was fixed in the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums but by then the damage was done.

With this entry you get a brief run down on what the Tanar'ri are: "chaos and evil defined", then a list of different varieties (all in the Planescape MC I I think, though not started up here). Then onto the blurb on the Balor and Marilith.

Balor

Balors are the typical 'devil' type demon, disappointingly similar to the Pit Fiend when you think about it - and also a blatantly obvious riff on the Balrog, complete with whip and sword. I have to be honest and say that I think they're among the least interesting of all the different lower planar entities, despite their high status. They're exactly what you would expect a mighty demon to look like. Nothing more, nothing less.

They also have a rather annoying "Yah boo sucks" routine, so that even if the party of PCs manages to kill one they're still likely to be levelled by the mighty explosion or one of them destroyed for picking up its sword.

The Prime Material Plane angle is intriguing: Balors are said to recognise its importance in the Blood War, which leads them to make pacts with mortals. Obviously a way to crowbar one into a game, but you do have to wonder why Balors bother being manipulative and clever when they could squish the entire population of an average Prime Material World without even thinking.

Marilith

Mariliths are the 'strategists' of the Blood War, which seems like an oxymoron - aren't Tanar'ri supposed to be the definition of chaos? So what strategy? The MM even recognises this problem, but brushes it under the carpet: "Due to the chaotic nature of the tanar'ri, it is not really possible to coordinate their activities, but the marilith are charged with it, nonetheless."

Ah, so that's okay then.

Not a great deal to say about the Marilith, beautiful snake woman with six arms, blah blah. They have a rivalry with the Glabrezu which I suppose is something that could be used in a game, with high level PCs being used as a tool in a conflict between two greater demons. That's really about it.

Anyway, maybe the beautiful entries on the Tanar'ri, Baatezu et al. in the Planescape books has really ruined the Monstrous Manual versions for me forever, because I have difficulty summoning much enthusiasm for this entry. A shame, because I really always liked the Tanar'ri the best.

I'm not looking forward to the Yuguloth entry...

08-15-2009, 11:22 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Oh, and I put up a poll.

08-15-2009, 11:41 AM

JohnBiles

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

It only had two Tanar'ri in it? Dang, what weaksauce.

08-15-2009, 03:46 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

You're making me choose which fiend-group is my favorite? It's like making me choose a favorite child! A wicked, awful child, to be sure, but still...

I voted yugoloth, but only by a nose. The Planescape material made them out to be the supreme chessmasters of the universe, and I still use them in such capacity these days, but I find I have increasing appreciation for the rigidity and surety of the baatezu's brand of evil. I mean, when else in game does one have opportunity to quote Scientology orientation videos?

08-15-2009, 03:48 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I've always loved the denizens of the Abyss, for the sheer ingenious variety you'll find, so definitely Tanar'ri.

Probably followed by Obyriths, because they're also pretty damn cool, but I don't suppose there are any of them in this book.

08-15-2009, 03:50 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Baatezu, tanar'ri, and yugoloth sound like car companies.

Vroom vroom vroom. Hot rodders from Hell. Drag racing down the streets of the Abyss for pink slips (lemures?). The vrock are obviously the T-Birds, and the bone devils are the Scorpions.

08-15-2009, 03:57 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

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That's about ten times what it should be, isn't it? Sounds like the "killed permanently" multiplier from 1e.

08-15-2009, 03:58 PM

Kiiratam

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

"This here car is animated by the souls of the damned!" Seriously, though: possessing fiends can animate objects, so it's a viable concept.

Between mariliths and succubi, I am compelled to vote tanar'ri.

08-15-2009, 04:42 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Of 2nd editions Fiends I would have to back Tanar'ri, just for the sheer variety.

As for their Monstrous Manual entry, I wonder why they didn't have a low-powered and a high-powered fiend like the Baatezu entry's Pit Fiend and Abishai? It seems an odd choice to have the top two non-unique Demons when they could have dropped one to make room to stat a Bar-Igura, Babau or Chasme.

There are a couple of oddities I noticed about their MM writeup.

The **Balor** entry describes them as having "grotesque fangs that drip with venom". Shame they don't have a poisonous bite listed. Still, both baatezu and tanar'ri are immune to poison, so maybe they aren't in the habit of using it.

The **Marilith** entry says "Where the balors are the influence and energy behind the war effort, the marilith are the brains and tactics". If that's the case, why are Balors the more intelligent of the two? (Balors super-genius, Marilith genius). I suppose Balors are the soul-gathering, war-inspiring political leader to the Marilith's strategy-planning general. Or they're just too Chaotic to care.:p

08-15-2009, 04:59 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That's about ten times what it should be, isn't it? Sounds like the "killed permanently" multiplier from 1e.

Maybe not 10 times. I don't have any Planescape books on hand but I think they were fixed to about 15,000 XP ish.

08-15-2009, 05:05 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Maybe not 10 times. I don't have any Planescape books on hand but I think they were fixed to about 15,000 XP ish.

Yeesh. Just noticed. The 4+1 HD black abishai is worth more XP than the 20 HD titan. A very planar ka-ching!

08-15-2009, 07:41 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Oh, and I put up a poll.

And for those of us who prefer demodands/gegeleths (sp)? ;)

08-15-2009, 07:56 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

And for those of us who prefer demodands/gegeleths (sp)? ;)

Gehreleth I think? Gerheleth? Gerehleth? Well there are only three kinds of them and they don't embody a major Evil alignment, so...

08-16-2009, 12:09 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I always thought that the names "Tanar'ri" and "baatezu" seemed backwards. Baatezu sounds more brutish and thuggish to me, while Tanar'ri sounds clever and scheming. But apparently that's not how it works. Not that I ever could tell them apart, even when they're "devils" and "demons".

08-16-2009, 05:36 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

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Probably followed by Obyriths, because they're also pretty damn cool, but I don't suppose there are any of them in this book.

Nope. Obyrith are a 3.5ism only. Oddly enough, they're sort of a conversion of the *Green Ronin's Book of Fiends* qlippoth, which were written by the same authors (Erik Mona, James Jacobs). Pretty much the only difference is that all qlippoth madness comes in the form of fascinate spells, whereas obyryths are more diverse in how they break your brain by just existing.

08-16-2009, 07:39 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Maybe not 10 times. I don't have any Planescape books on hand but I think they were fixed to about 15,000 XP ish.

As of Planescape MC 1, Mariliths are about 23,000, Balors 26,000.

I always liked the little tidbit that "There are at least 24 balors known to exist." Surely there are few better ways to show the PCs their power than to have them fight one of the multiverse's 24 balors. You could run a campaign about hunting down all 24.

The iron weapons vulnerability bit always kind of confused me. Will any iron weapon hurt a Tanar'ri, or does it need to be a *magical* iron weapon?

08-16-2009, 11:41 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I think I prefer the Baatezu by a nose, if only because I know more about them and they figured into my games more often. I think it helps that there's an inherent order to them. I always lose track of the demons around the weird frog and goat things. Not that I'm complaining about the succubus, of course. ;) Even so, I think I'm more an erinyes type.

08-16-2009, 01:59 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

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I always preferred the erinyes too. The alu-fiend is also underrated, if you can get past the little bat wings. ;)

08-18-2009, 12:45 AM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

For me, nothing quite sums up my dislike of 2e (over 1e) back in the day than the words "tanar'ri" and "baatezu." They're demons and devils, dammit, and they live in the Abyss or the Nine Hells. I know why the renamings were done and the pressures from lunatic moms that TSR was under but that doesn't mean I have to like it. They still sound to me like compromise and bowdlerizing. Bah, I say. BAH.

I'm disappointed that the 2e monstrous Manual has such a weak sampling of demons, as well. As I recall the 1e Monster Manual had six or seven devils and about that many types of demons. Why the 2e paucity? Is it because they showed up in Planescape products eventually?

08-18-2009, 01:16 PM

noisms

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Well there were a shit-ton in the Planescape books but they can't have been in the works back in 1989 or whenever it was that the MM was published. I do think there was a 2e planar monstrous compendium released not long after the MM, however, and it contained a lot of tanar'ri and baatezu.

I never got the outrage about the name changes, to be honest. Tanar'ri aren't called devils anymore, okay, but they're still embodiments of chaos and evil who revel in pain and murder. It's not like the entire concept of evil beings from another dimension was removed from the game.

08-18-2009, 01:36 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Tarrasque

Well well well, look who it is. D&D's most powerful and most famous unique monster. A 50' long bipedal reptile with 300 hit points, a THACO of -5, 6 attacks doing a potential 118 points of damage per round, unlimited regenerative ability unless reduced to -30 hit points and *wished* to death, and immunity to practically all bolt spells. An awesome depiction of ultimate destructiveness or the point at which power creep started getting a bit ridiculous? You decide.

(I especially like the 'Note' at the end of the entry: "Creatures with a minus THACO can only be hit on a 1." I always assumed this was a typo and was meant to say that creatures with a minus THACO can only miss on a 1. In which case why give the thing -5 THACO when -1 is just as good?)

The Tarrasque is a good concept, anyway; I think there's always a place for gargantuan avenging beings which awaken only rarely, for a week or two, before disappearing again. The MM has these periods of activity 5d4 months apart, though, which seems a bit too frequent. I'd rather have the Tarrasque awaken cyclically once every 13 or 17 years, like a cicada. Either way, the Adventure to Slay the Tarrasque writes itself - DMing 101, you might say.

The main problem with the Tarrasque is that common to all really BIG monsters in D&D - namely, scaling. A 50' tall monster, no matter how slow moving, is surely going to be able to move faster than a 6' tall human, simply by virtue of the length of its strides. But the Tarrasque only has a move of 9. And the creature should surely be able to swallow humanoid beings with ease - but it is only given the chance to sever limbs on attack rolls which score a natural 18+. D&D has never been very good at emulating size, but the Tarrasque is the point at which suspension of disbelief snaps, for me.

One thing you can say about the Tarrasque, however, is that it would make the ultimate entry in my soon-to-be-released tome, "Compendium of Things You can Do with Monster Corpses Volume I" - how does 1d4 shields of +5 enchantment and 10d10 diamonds worth 1,000 gp each sound? Another plus point is the entry's rather nice line in cheesy ominousness and the return of the sages (in the form of "tarrasque experts", no less!):

Quote:

It is hoped that the tarrasque is a solitary creation, some hideous abomination unleashed by the dark arts or by elder, forgotten gods to punish all of nature. The elemental nature of the tarrasque leads the few living tarrasque experts to speculate that the elemental princes of evil have something to do with its existence. In any case, the location of the tarrasque remains a mystery, as it rarely leaves witnesses in its wake, and nature quickly grows over all remnants of its presence. It is rumored that the tarrasque is responsible for the extinction of one ancient civilization, for the records of their last days spoke of a "great reptilian punisher sent by the gods to end the world."

This is the kind of thing that makes the MM so great. What ancient civilisation? That's for YOU, the DM, to decide. Who are the "elemental princes of evil"? That's for YOU, the DM, to decide. You don't get better spurs to imagination.

08-18-2009, 01:40 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I never got the outrage about the name changes, to be honest. Tanar'ri aren't called devils anymore, okay, but they're still embodiments of chaos and evil who revel in pain and murder. It's not like the entire concept of evil beings from another dimension was removed from the game.

I think you got the devils and demons mixed up.

If they called the dragons the Bormophorin, and the reds became the Mugulons, the blacks the Sosyruths, the whites the Lumula, the greens the Gussuloth, and the blues the Aizugon -- wouldn't that be silly, unnecessary, and distracting?

Also, the name changes weren't just cosmetic. The changes were accompanied by a strongly implied setting that didn't necessarily fit everyone's view of the planes or the role of demons and devils.

08-18-2009, 02:08 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I think you got the devils and demons mixed up.

If they called the dragons the Bormophorin, and the reds became the Mugulons, the blacks the Sosyruths, the whites the Lumula, the greens the Gussuloth, and the blues the Aizugon -- wouldn't that be silly, unnecessary, and distracting?

Also, the name changes weren't just cosmetic. The changes were accompanied by a strongly implied setting that didn't necessarily fit everyone's view of the planes or the role of demons and devils.

There was an implied setting before, of course - a much more strongly *faux*-Christian one. It's arguably the case that tanar'ri and baatezu are more 'pure' fantasy.

Anyway, I can easily see this discussion derailing the thread, so if people want to continue it shall we start up a new one?

08-18-2009, 02:27 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The main problem with the Tarrasque is that common to all really BIG monsters in D&D - namely, scaling. A 50' tall monster, no matter how slow moving, is surely going to be able to move faster than a 6' tall human, simply by virtue of the length of its strides. But the Tarrasque only has a move of 9.

It's a lot more complex than you think. A lot of people assume larger animals have more robust bones, for instance. The square-cube law and all. Twice the size means eight times the mass but only four times the strength. So the bones have to be thicker and the muscles stronger. But the evidence really doesn't support that. Yes, a hippo's bones are much thicker than a deer's which are thicker than a dog's. But elephants, the biggest of all land animals, actually have fairly slender bones (when allometrically scaled, closer to the deer than any of the others).

The way they prevent their bones from breaking is partially stance (their legs go straight down, instead of being bent -- and bent legs help with running), and partially duty factor (how long a foot stays on the ground during a stride). This means gait changes. The largest animals lose the ability to run or gallop. Elephants rarely even trot.

Even at the same gait, the number of strides per time interval drops as creatures get larger. The feet of a mouse just at the threshold between a trot and a gallop are hitting the ground a lot more often than a horse in the same situation. This partially explains why larger creatures are more efficient runners, but also explains why running speed doesn't scale directly with the linear dimension.. Yes, longer legs mean a faster normal walking rate because the least energy intensive way to move is to let your legs swing like pendulums. But the larger the pendulum the lower the frequency, so this also doesn't scale at a direct linear rate.

I've also seen it argued that speed correlates with a root of the linear dimension, but given how hard it is to measure top and speeds and the limited sample sizes, it's hard to generalize. I've also seen several authors suggest there is considerable circumstantial evidence that the optimal size for speed is roughly human size (cheetahs, pronghorns, etc). The tarrasque is about the size of the largest sauropods (I'm ignoring the unrealistic proportions). Sauropods probably lived life very slowly. Falling or even mistepping could be dangerous. This may or may not apply to a fantasy creature, but particularly with its upright stance there's a good argument that the tarrasque hobbles along at a slow shuffle. Think a little old man without his walker.

08-18-2009, 08:01 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

[Who are the "elemental princes of evil"? That's for YOU, the DM, to decide.

They are Imix (fire), Ogremoch (earth), Olhydra (water), Yan-C-Bin (air) and Cryonax (ice). And IIRC they were in the 1e FF. I know they are in the elemental MC for planescape because that is where I got the names from.

08-18-2009, 09:15 PM

Belchion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tarrasque

The Tarrasque is a good concept, anyway; I think there's always a place for gargantuan avenging beings which awaken only rarely, for a week or two, before disappearing again.

Are Gargantuans baby Tarrasques? After all, they are both filling this niche more or less.

08-18-2009, 11:40 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

They are Imix (fire), Ogremoch (earth), Olhydra (water), Yan-C-Bin (air) and Cryonax (ice). And IIRC they were in the 1e FF. I know they are in the elemental MC for planescape because that is where I got the names from.

Okay, I suppose I was speaking extemporaneously there. Haven't read the Planescape MC III in years.

08-18-2009, 11:51 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

It's a lot more complex than you think. A lot of people assume larger animals have more robust bones, for instance. The square-cube law and all. Twice the size means eight times the mass but only four times the strength. So the bones have to be thicker and the muscles stronger. But the evidence really doesn't support that. Yes, a hippo's bones are much thicker than a deer's which are thicker than a dog's. But elephants, the biggest of all land animals, actually have fairly slender bones (when allometrically scaled, closer to the deer than any of the others).

The odd one out here is the hippo, which has extra-heavy leg bones to keep it right-side-up in water.

Note also that while elephants can't run, they can walk *really* fast.

08-19-2009, 12:51 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I don't think that gargantua work as baby tarrasques, because they're so much bigger - a gargantua is 100-200 feet tall, whereas Big T is only 50' long.

08-19-2009, 01:05 AM

Strangething

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have the earlier, three-ring binder version of the 2e MM. In this version, the demons & devils are not only renamed, but banished to the "extra-planar" appendix. (Sold separately.) There was a much bigger variety of fiends in that. All the ones from the 1e MM and more.

It doesn't make up for the absence of Tabaxi, though.

08-19-2009, 01:11 AM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I don't think that gargantua work as baby tarrasques, because they're so much bigger - a gargantua is 100-200 feet tall, whereas Big T is only 50' long.

The *current* Tarrasque is only 50' long. You see, gargantuas are indeed the adolescent form of the Tarrasque, but you don't become the Big Dude just by growing older. No, you have to kill and eat all your siblings. These battles for "succession" rage for decades across entire worlds, devastating continents in their wake. At the end, only the strongest, smartest and quickest of the gargantuas remain. The last time this happened, the winner happened to be an abnormally small specimen. Perhaps because he was so fast on his feet, or so wily. Or maybe the last time was so long ago, it was during an Ice Age, and the gargantuas were more compact then, in order to better retain heat.

This introduces a good reason for adventurers *not* to kill the Tarrasque. Now that gargantuas are bigger, the succession fight will be that much worse and the humanoids races may not survive this one.

08-19-2009, 03:03 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

As for their Monstrous Manual entry, I wonder why they didn't have a low-powered and a high-powered fiend like the Baatezu entry's Pit Fiend and Abishai? It seems an odd choice to have the top two non-unique Demons when they could have dropped one to make room to stat a Bar-Igura, Babau or Chasme.

True. I think all the non-genie outsiders were handled rather badly in *Monstrous Manual*; IMO, they could have tossed away something like Hatori or Kirre, and used those pages to give us a little bit more fiends and slaadi.

Quote:

The **Balor** entry describes them as having "grotesque fangs that drip with venom". Shame they don't have a poisonous bite listed.

Pit fiends, on the other hand have grotesque fangs that drip with venom, and have a poisonous bite. What do you mean that balors are too similar to them? ;)

08-19-2009, 03:08 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The main problem with the Tarrasque is that common to all really BIG monsters in D&D - namely, scaling

I thought that the problem with the Tarrasque was that anybody with a flying carpet and a couple +1 bows could sit just above the Tarrasque's and ping it to death, and it couldn't do anything about it. Not exactly what you want out of a world threatening menace.

Or that the Tarrasque lacked any actual reason for existence or built-in story hooks.

08-19-2009, 04:23 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

It's a lot more complex than you think. A lot of people assume larger animals have more robust bones, for instance. The square-cube law and all. Twice the size means eight times the mass but only four times the strength. So the bones have to be thicker and the muscles stronger. But the evidence really doesn't support that. Yes, a hippo's bones are much thicker than a deer's which are thicker than a dog's. But elephants, the biggest of all land animals, actually have fairly slender bones (when allometrically scaled, closer to the deer than any of the others).

While true, the majority of large animals are pretty close to one square-cube line, while Hippos and rhinos can run and gallop, but don't do so very often. That suggests that Elephants are "an exception that does proves the rule" - they have a lower bone thickness to body mass ratio, so needs must live a less active lifestyle. Contrariwise, most extinct megafauna (Indricotherium, big dinosaurs etc) have more robust skeletons.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Sauropods probably lived life very slowly. Falling or even mistepping could be dangerous. This may or may not apply to a fantasy creature, but particularly with its upright stance there's a good argument that the tarrasque hobbles along at a slow shuffle. Think a little old man without his walker.

Yes, but the Tarrasque can regenerate and is nigh-immortal, so even if it falls and breaks a leg, or even its neck, it just gets better! Its healing powers may even have brought about its great size, with a hypothetical "ancestral Tarrasque" being limited in size by the strain its body could endure.

08-19-2009, 04:50 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

While true, the majority of large animals are pretty close to one square-cube line, while Hippos and rhinos can run and gallop, but don't do so very often. That suggests that Elephants are "an exception that does prove the rule" - they have a lower bone thickness to body mass ratio, so needs must live a less active lifestyle. Contrariwise, most extinct megafauna (Indricotherium, big dinosaurs etc) have more robust skeletons.

McGowan and Alexander disagree with you, though I may not be up to date. On the other hand, tyrannosaur skeletons show a number of adaptations for running, and the smaller specimens (*Nanotyrannus* is probably just a juvenile) could have been as fleet as the ostrich dinosaurs, though as always when it comes to the biomechanics of extinct animals there is considerably disagreement about what that means, particularly for the elephant-sized adults.

08-19-2009, 05:04 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I really like the Monstrous Manual's illustration of the tarrasque, but it doesn't look that much like the tarrasque as written. It's far too intelligent-looking. And mean. It makes me think of a human warlord who's turned himself into a tarrasque-like creature to gain its unbelievable power.

08-19-2009, 06:05 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Another option for the tarrasque. This is a fantasy setting. We don't have to rely on the application of cold, abstract laws to run the natural world. Instead, we have personages. Incarnations. Manifestations. Animism is alive and well. Mother Earth isn't just a mystical concept, but a concrete entity with specific goals.

One goal is to keep the growth of the civilization in check. She doesn't mind it, not really. It's kind of cute and all. The humanoids are like adorable little puppies. But every once in a while, they get out of hand. They need the rolled newspaper, the stern talking to.

In every corner of the world, there is a tarrasque. Each was originally a more mundane beast, fed on the Milk of the Earth. Milk that causes enormous growth, grants tremendous vitality. They all have certain traits in common. But around that center, they also vary, like the kaiju. Each still has some characteristics derived from the normal animal they once were.

The one in the picture in the Monstrous Compendium may have been a human warlord. Not quite as bestially strong, but with more of the low cunning. Not truly sapient perhaps, but smart. Clever. Tricky. And with hands that can grasp and move.

One based on a turtle might have a stronger shell, almost impenetrable, but lumber even more slowly. One based on a cat might have particularly terrible fangs and leaping legs. One based on an ostrich might have a longer neck, powerful kicks and fast running.

Each biome has its own. They sleep, they wake, they destroy. That's their purpose. They stem the growth, the spread of civilization. The old bear that became the tarrasque of the endless taiga is fat, has a lumbering gait, and has huge paws. The woodcutters who are turning that forested expanse into planks and towns and stockades are checked by her rampages. Settlements spread, but only so far. When lords and merchants push further into the woods, there is something there to push back.

Same with the dwarven strip mines along the tree line. Before they can turn into eyesores of eroding escarpments and industrial waste, the giant tarrasque with the flat tail and huge gnawing teeth destroys it. They are still mines, but now there

is time for the scrub to cover them over, take them back into the womb of the Mother. The earth heals.

The cities of the plains surrounded by spreading rings of tilled lands only spread so far into the grassland. Hiding among the rolling hills there is a twisting, almost limbless tarrasque that snaps and bites. Caravans vanish, crops are ground into dust. The serpent mitigates the size of these centers of population. Along the coast, emerging dripping and cold from the sea to crush the wharves and palaces is another mottled specimen, that once was a newt.

They can be killed, occasionally. But it's generally not worth the effort. There are always more, there will always be another. As long as culture and learning thrive, centers of commerce, architectural monuments, and the exploitation of natural resources, a tarrasque will rise. Not to stamp it out, just to stamp it back a little. Prevent centralized empires, prevent the unprotected topsoil from simply sliding into the sea. Keeping the world in a kind of stasis even, by preventing the industrial revolution.

08-19-2009, 09:54 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

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That's what I feel too, the 2nd edition illustration of the Tarrasque looks a bit like a Jack Kirby monster to me. It doesn't really fit the Monstrous Manual description very well. Then again, the AD&D version of the Tarrasque isn't that close to the **legendary French dragon** it was named after.

08-19-2009, 10:04 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

One goal is to keep the growth of the civilization in check. She doesn't mind it, not really. It's kind of cute and all. The humanoids are like adorable little puppies. But every once in a while, they get out of hand. They need the rolled newspaper, the stern talking to.

The late lamented Gary Gygax proposed a similar explanation for why there was so much wilderness in his Dangerous Journeys game world - if the humans tried to destroy it, the Forces of Nature would thwack them.

I came up with a somewhat more prosaic explanation. A giant anthropophagous monster that only appeared when "civilization is overgrown" because otherwise there simply weren't enough humanoids to eat for it to be worth its while waking up. I imagine it resembling a Kaiju-scale many tongued anteater; smashing open cities, castles and D&D dungeons with its colossal claws, then licking up the inhabitants by the thousand with its furlong-long tongues.

08-19-2009, 11:43 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

I thought that the problem with the Tarrasque was that anybody with a flying carpet and a couple +1 bows could sit just above the Tarrasque's and ping it to death, and it couldn't do anything about it. Not exactly what you want out of a world threatening menace.

Or that the Tarrasque lacked any actual reason for existence or built-in story hooks.

Well I think the Tarrasque more or less is one giant story hook in every sense!

08-19-2009, 04:21 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **HaplessVictim**

The *current* Tarrasque is only 50' long. You see, gargantuas are indeed the adolescent form of the Tarrasque, but you don't become the Big Dude just by growing older. No, you have to kill and eat all your siblings. These battles for "succession" rage for decades across entire worlds, devastating continents in their wake. At the end, only the strongest, smartest and quickest of the gargantuas remain. The last time this happened, the winner happened to be an abnormally small specimen. Perhaps because he was so fast on his feet, or so wily. Or maybe the last time was so long ago, it was during an Ice Age, and **the gargantuas were more compact then, in order to better retain heat.**

Eh? I'm guessing you mean compact in the sense of "thick-bodied and without long legs/tails/ears etc" so they have the same weight in a shorter length, rather than just "small", since a smaller creature loses heat faster all things being equal, since it has a higher mass/area ratio. It's certainly conceivable to go from 200' long to 50' long and still have the same volume, just by being twice as wide/tall. Still, I never imagined Gargantuans as being that skinny.

08-19-2009, 09:37 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Eh? I'm guessing you mean compact in the sense of "thick-bodied and without long legs/tails/ears etc" so they have the same weight in a shorter length, rather than just "small", since a smaller creature loses heat faster all things being equal, since it has a higher mass/area ratio. It's certainly conceivable to go from 200' long to 50' long and still have the same volume, just by being twice as wide/tall. Still, I never imagined Gargantuans as being that skinny.

I would suspect that the Tarrasque *is* much denser than the Gargantuas--though perhaps I'm affected by my favored edition's incarnation of the beast, in which his mere presence can distort magical flight effects.

08-20-2009, 05:10 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

I would suspect that the Tarrasque *is* much denser than the Gargantuas--though perhaps I'm affected by my favored edition's incarnation of the beast, in which his mere presence can distort magical flight effects.

I like that idea:

"All we need is a flying carpet and a couple +1 bows and we can just ping it to death"

...

"Mayday! Mayday! We're going down!!"

...

"Rrraaawwwgggg!!! Stomp!! Stomp!! Chomp!! Chomp!!" :D

And it makes sort-of-sense internally. Of course the 400' long monster has gravity-density manipulation, how else do you think it climbs up skyscrapers without them collapsing under its weight, let alone flying like its cousin the Mega-Dino-Bat.

08-21-2009, 12:39 AM

Mikaze

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Back on the marilith and balor for a second, it really needs to be stressed how ugly their art is compared to that in the Planescape MC. Tony DiTerlizzi's marilith is still my all time favorite example of that monster, and that design actually got used again by another artist in the Planescape Hellbound boxed set.

That chick was rockin' a really cool hat, is all I'm sayin'.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I'm not looking forward to the Yuguloth entry...

Trust me, I remember what it is. You have absolutely no reason to look forward to it.

Planescape Monstrous Compendium was a real eye-opener after *that*.

08-21-2009, 03:30 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I like that idea:

"All we need is a flying carpet and a couple +1 bows and we can just ping it to death"

...

"Mayday! Mayday! We're going down!!"

...

"Rrraaawwwgggg!!! Stomp!! Stomp!! Chomp!! Chomp!!" :D

Yeah, both problems I mention have been addressed in later editions.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

And it makes sort-of-sense internally. Of course the 400' long monster has gravity-density manipulation, how else do you think it climbs up skyscrapers without them collapsing under its weight, let alone flying like its cousin the Mega-Dino-Bat.

Or simply how it ignores the square-cube law and stands on such spindly legs.

08-21-2009, 04:36 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mikaze**

Trust me, I remember what it is. You have absolutely no reason to look forward to it.

In no small part because they're just Guardian Daemons from 1e, with the word "daemon" search-and-replaced...

08-21-2009, 08:16 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mikaze**

Back on the marilith and balor for a second, it really needs to be stressed how ugly their art is compared to that in the Planescape MC. Tony DiTerlizzi's marilith is still my all time favorite example of that monster, and that design actually got used again by another artist in the Planescape Hellbound boxed set.

Hmm, I quite like the Monstrous Manual version of the Marilith, it's got a 'Marvel Comics' vibe to it, looking like a cross between a six-armed Red Sonja and a giant snake. DT's version of the Marilith looks a bit off to me, I think it's something to do with the proportions - she's got very skinny arms and a big head. I like his other ~~demons~~ tanar'ri better.

08-21-2009, 10:24 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Yeah, both problems I mention have been addressed in later editions.

Jet packs? Ballooning, on spider silk? Giving them a climbing skill so they can play in the rigging a skyship? (Imagine how big a ship you'd need if tarrasques fit in the same ecological niche normally filled by *rats*). Causing spontaneous vulcanism and riding the magma plumes through the sky? Parachute pants and wind machines?

08-21-2009, 04:17 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Jet packs? Ballooning, on spider silk? Giving them a climbing skill so they can play in the rigging a skyship? (Imagine how big a ship you'd need if tarrasques fit in the same ecological niche normally filled by *rats*). Causing spontaneous vulcanism and riding the magma plumes through the sky? Parachute pants and wind machines?

Super-Leaping augmented with gravity/density control. Didn't you get the issue where the Tarrasque has a jumping race with the Hulk?;)

08-21-2009, 04:47 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, I quite like the Monstrous Manual version of the Marilith, it's got a 'Marvel Comics' vibe to it, looking like a cross between a six-armed Red Sonja and a giant snake. DT's version of the Marilith looks a bit off to me, I think it's something to do with the proportions - she's got very skinny arms and a big head. I like his other ~~demons~~ tanar'ri better.

Does anyone have links to these DT pics, by the way?

08-21-2009, 05:54 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

Does anyone have links to these DT pics, by the way?

You'd have to try a google image search I think.

08-21-2009, 09:45 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

Does anyone have links to these DT pics, by the way?

You can see small versions of most of the Planscape illustrations on Sferopedia (their tanar'ri page is [here](#)). Unfortunately, the site's in Czech (at least I *think* it's Czech, not being able to read any Eastern European or Slavic languages), so is hard for non-speakers to navigate.

I'm leery of clicking some of the links, better safe than sorry!

08-22-2009, 08:16 AM

Mikaze

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

DT's version of the Marilith looks a bit off to me, I think it's something to do with the proportions - she's got very skinny arms and a big head.

Man, you start picking DiTerlizzi art apart over proportions, you'll never be happy with his work. ;)

08-25-2009, 07:07 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, I'm usually fine with people drawing beings with weird non-human proportions when they're weird non-humans, but occasionally the look may not gel with what I feel to be the nature of the creature in question.

The Marilith illustration in the Monstrous Manual looks like she'd be a more powerful melee combatant than the Planescape version. Although her artistic realisation may not be as technically proficient, she's a strapping lass, with noticeably muscle definition. The dT illustration has what appear to be small, slim arms.

Although that would explain why Mariliths in 2nd edition AD&D don't get a Strength bonus with weapon attacks - they may be 7' tall, but they have arms the size of a 5'5" woman. Of course, Marilith strength could be derived more from magic than muscle.

Come to think of it, the Monstrous Manual doesn't give the Balor a Strength bonus either. Just look at the Type VI demon's picture - he's a 12 foot fiend built like Arnold Schwarzenegger. You'd expect the 2E MM would say he has 18/00 Strength like it does the similarly-sized Pit Fiend, although even that seems a bit low considering they're both mighty fiends as big as a small giant. I'd think they'd merit a Strength score of 19 or the low 20s.

By contrast, in 3rd edition a Marilith has Str 29 and a Balor Str 35. Admittedly Strength scales differently in that version of the game.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mikaze**

Man, you start picking DiTerlizzi art apart over proportions, you'll never be happy with his work. ;)

08-25-2009, 07:51 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

(Imagine how big a ship you'd need if tarrasques fit in the same ecological niche normally filled by *rats*).

There's a Spelljammer supplement with a planet full of Tarrasques.

I stopped reading that supplement right there, which was like page 3.

08-25-2009, 04:55 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Come to think of it, the Monstrous Manual doesn't give the Balor a Strength bonus either. Just look at the Type VI demon's picture - he's a 12 foot fiend built like Arnold Schwarzenegger. You'd expect the 2E MM would say he has 18/00 Strength like it does the similarly-sized Pit Fiend, although even that seems a bit low considering they're both mighty fiends as big as a small giant. I'd think they'd merit a Strength score of 19 or the low 20s.

Hmm, further on that, an alternative explanation for those fiends with huge muscles but no listed Strength bonus is that it's all smoke and mirrors. Considering they are evil spirits clothed in unnatural flesh, said flesh may not be that substantial. Balors could mostly be just smoke and fire, with the appearance of massive musculature to help them strike fear in mortals.

08-25-2009, 05:02 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

There's a Spelljammer supplement with a planet full of Tarrasques.

I stopped reading that supplement right there, which was like page 3.

Ah yes, the rock-eating Tarrasques of Falx in Realmspace.

They'd be the universe's greatest source of *+5 shields*, if only we could figure out how to harvest them. ;)

08-25-2009, 09:37 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

There's a Spelljammer supplement with a planet full of Tarrasques.

I stopped reading that supplement right there, which was like page 3.

That reminds me a bit of Niven and Pournelle and Barnes' Heorot books. While it's not the size of a tarrasque, the series features a super-efficient predator (dubbed "grendels") with the equivalent of a nitrous oxide injector in their adrenal gland and the ability to grow to full size very quickly. They mow through the colonists, and even when supposedly wiped out they return in an even worse form.

08-26-2009, 08:10 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That reminds me a bit of Niven and Pournelle and Barnes' Heorot books. While it's not the size of a tarrasque, the series features a super-efficient predator (dubbed "grendels") with the equivalent of a nitrous oxide injector in their adrenal gland and the ability to grow to full size very quickly. They mow through the colonists, and even when supposedly wiped out they return in an even worse form.

The adults are the predators of the larvae. When the colonists kill off all the adults, most of the larvae mature - meaning that there are suddenly hundreds of superfast killing machines. At least there was a limitation to Speed (overheating). The "monster" in the sequel was a bit more fantastic IMO.

08-28-2009, 01:03 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Tasloi

Another orc substitute of the not-all-that-interesting variety, Tasloi are Chaotic Evil ape-like creatures which live in jungles. A stronger enemy than goblins or kobolds, though not by much, a lot of what can be said about those creatures also applies to the Tasloi. Sneaky, traps, numbers, etc., though the entry details Tasloi battle tactics in considerably more detail than it does for most other creatures.

Tasloi domesticate giant spiders and giant wasps, which is slightly reminiscent of Warhammer's forest goblins and a nice image - you don't get nearly enough giant insect riding creatures in D&D. Although since Tasloi are able to communicate with monkeys and apes, I think the designers missed a trick in not writing up Tasloi as having domesticated gorillas and orang utans to ride around on. As I'm sure you'll agree there is something sinister and vicious about apes, which would add a level of interest to the Tasloi which they don't *really* have in their original form.

A point of interest in Tasloi (and I think D&D humanoids generally, though I can't be sure) is that males outnumber females (100 males for every 70 females). This seems unrealistic, given that it's the males who do all the hunting and fighting. I wonder what the reasoning is behind it. Probably, more bad guys for PCs to kill.

Tasloi seem tailor-made to be the remnants of an ancient jungle civilisation who have long ago reverted to barbarism and primitivism. That's a cliché, but a good one, and probably how I'd use them in a game if I ever did.

08-28-2009, 02:25 PM

lthaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Tasloi also share with Goblin the distinction of having really sketchy and not very good DiTerlizzi illustration.

08-28-2009, 04:46 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

Tasloi also share with Goblin the distinction of having really sketchy and not very good DiTerlizzi illustration.

I don't mind the Tasloi picture actually. It's not the best but it's serviceable, and at least it actually IS a Tasloi and not, say, a putitative kobold. ;)

08-28-2009, 09:41 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tasloi

Another orc substitute of the not-all-that-interesting variety, Tasloi are Chaotic Evil ape-like creatures which live in jungles. A stronger enemy than goblins or kobolds, though not by much, a lot of what can be said about those creatures also applies to the Tasloi. Sneaky, traps, numbers, etc., though the entry details Tasloi battle tactics in considerably more detail than it does for most other creatures.

Oh I think they have a bit more potential than that. Tasloi are the terror in the trees, a rustling among the leaves than then becomes a leaping mass of screaming little green men who rain down javelins and scuttling away. Unlike goblins and kobolds, they are *fast*, their Climb speed of 15 means they can not be outrun in flight or pursuit.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Tasloi domesticate giant spiders and giant wasps, which is slightly reminiscent of Warhammer's forest goblins and a nice image - you don't get nearly enough giant insect riding creatures in D&D. Although since Tasloi are able to communicate with monkeys and apes, I think the designers missed a trick in not writing up Tasloi as having domesticated gorillas and orang utans to ride around on. As I'm sure you'll agree there is something sinister and vicious about apes, which would add a level of interest to the Tasloi which they don't *really* have in their original form.

Hmm, I imagine them using smaller apes and monkeys as spies and thieves. They always know where you are in the jungle, because that "innocent little bushbaby" has been telling you of their movements. When you stop for the night, a band of lemurs wanders through camp. It's only after the night-guard driven them off that you realize they've stolen your wizard's wand and three-quarters of your arrows.

As for the big apes, AD&D hobgoblins are the ones with a knack for controlling carnivorous apes. Maybe those killer apes see Tasloi as potential meals, not allies. Sure they can talk, but a Carnivorous Ape could view these little green jungle goblins as too puny to treat as equals.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

A point of interest in Tasloi (and I think D&D humanoids generally, though I can't be sure) is that males outnumber females (100 males for every 70 females). This seems unrealistic, given that it's the males who do all the hunting and fighting. I wonder what the reasoning is behind it. Probably, more bad guys for PCs to kill.

Yes, we haven't really gone into the male-female ratios of AD&D's humanoid monsters very deeply on this thread. Most of them have more males than females, some twice as many. It's certainly a puzzle, here are a few possible explanations.

- These goblin-types could frequently kill their females, viewing their lives of little worth.
- Mother-goblinoids just produce more boy babies than girls.
- Goblinoids have a lot of transvestites, many of those "males" are actually female goblins who dress and act like males, and the foolish humans/elves/dwarves just can't tell the difference.
- Some or all goblinoids are capable of changing sex, under complicated and hard-to-predict stimuli. When times are hard and they must fight or die, many of the females turn into males (who are stronger and better

fighters), in times of peace or after the loss of many warriors, some males turn into females so they can breed back their numbers more swiftly.

08-28-2009, 10:35 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Goblinoids have a lot of transvestites, many of those "males" are actually female goblins who dress and act like males, and the foolish humans/elves/dwarves just can't tell the difference.

I like this. It makes goblinoid society a little more interesting, too!

08-28-2009, 10:59 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

You're assuming goblinoids *have* a sex. Maybe they bud, a proto-goblin growing out from each breast. Drawing from the mass of those huge pectorals like a chick draws sustenance and material from the yolk. Generally, there is sufficient mass in the upper body to have only two children. One from each pec. Having a child in this fashion leaves a lasting mark on the parent. Protrusions remain on the chest where the young goblinoids pulled away. And with the loss of some of their body mass, the parent is smaller, with considerably less upper body musculature.

In other words, before they have a baby goblinoids appear male. After, they appear female. At least to the ignorant hu-mans.

08-29-2009, 09:44 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, I imagine them using smaller apes and monkeys as spies and thieves. They always know where you are in the jungle, because that "innocent little bushbaby" has been telling you of their movements. When you stop for the night, a band of lemurs wanders through camp. It's only after the night-guard driven them off that you realize they've stolen your wizard's wand and three-quarters of your arrows.

Love it.

Quote:

Yes, we haven't really gone into the male-female ratios of AD&D's humanoid monsters very deeply on this thread. Most of them have more males than females, some twice as many. It's certainly a puzzle, here are a few possible explanations.

- These goblin-types could frequently kill their females, viewing their lives of little worth.
- Mother-goblinoids just produce more boy babies than girls.
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- Some or all goblinoids are capable of changing sex, under complicated and hard-to-predict stimuli. When times are hard and they must fight or die, many of the females turn into males (who are stronger and better

fighters), in times of peace or after the loss of many warriors, some males turn into females so they can breed back their numbers more swiftly.

Another possibility that occurs to me as a subsidiary of the first point is that the Tasloi often just abandon female babies in the forest.

Could be a nice little poser for a party: female baby Tasloi found in the forest - what do you do with it? You can't take her with you, and she's at least nominally "evil", but can you in good conscience leave her to die?

08-29-2009, 07:07 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Yes, we haven't really gone into the male-female ratios of AD&D's humanoid monsters very deeply on this thread. Most of them have more males than females, some twice as many. It's certainly a puzzle, here are a few possible explanations.

One of my favorite Dragon articles (Survival is a Group Effort from 89) has a much more depressing idea on the subject- infanticide. Female infants are either killed because they won't become warriors or because they don't get nearly as good care as males. The reason hobgoblins have equal numbers is their intelligence. They get that more females that survive equals more warriors down the line (a lot more with their short generations).

08-29-2009, 07:12 PM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

I would suspect that the Tarrasque *is* much denser than the Gargantuas--though perhaps I'm affected by my favored edition's incarnation of the beast, in which his mere presence can distort magical flight effects.

I did think the grounding aura was a slightly, ah, obvious solution to the problem of getting picked to death by flyers. I used the City of the Tarrasque in my 4e game, however, and it permitted the super-fun additional creepy dynamic that, as you approached the building, you were surrounded by small, thin bones - birds actually fell clean out of the sky.

The Tasloi I can honestly say I've never used, nor felt the urge to use. No "traction", I guess.

08-29-2009, 07:57 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yeah Goblin transexuals FTW!

I have long had a theory that Lizardmen are actually all female and reproduce via parthenogenesis and magic. Now my reasoning for this was largely seeing a documentary on those lesbian lizards, but actually it does make sense; lizards have two penises, Lizard"men" are always drawn as having none.

They had a great empire, but teh males of their species were all ultimate warriors types, and they genetically engineered themselves with magic to be teh ultimate killing machines, and then went insane and became non-sentient. Teh females

started using something called "parthenogenetic unisexual pseudocopulation", but with magic, so as to avoid them and still reproduce. Occasionally a male one is born and survives, it becomes one of those lizard monsters you see in deserts, or one of those savage "lizardmen" that they have in gladiatorial arenas pwning everyone.

Oh, and teh females need magic to properly sexually reproduce, otherwise they just produce clones of themselves and that causes lack of genetic diversity and disease, hence they stick to deserts.

That's my thoughts on it anyway. My overly thought out thoughts on it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Another possibility that occurs to me as a subsidiary of the first point is that the Tasloi often just abandon female babies in the forest.

Could be a nice little poser for a party: female baby Tasloi found in the forest - what do you do with it? You can't take her with you, and she's at least nominally "evil", but can you in good conscience leave her to die?

Simple solution. Sell the evil monkey baby.

Find teh site where they are dumping them and harvest them. Hell, make a deal with teh evil monkeys, swap female evil monkey babies for gold and your tied up enemies. Then kidnap some male evil monkeys and start breeding them. They could be teh next big thing in pets.

I man how much would you pay for an evil monkey that you could train? A lot; that's what!

I bet teh thieves guild will give you a fair price. Plus give them poodle-cuts and make their debut into high society.

I mean evil monkeys, and they can use their monkey control powers to make normal monkeys evil, and run them as pickpockets Fagin-style!

08-29-2009, 08:15 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

I did think the grounding aura was a slightly, ah, obvious solution to the problem of getting picked to death by flyers. I used the City of the Tarrasque in my 4e game, however, and it permitted the super-fun additional creepy dynamic that, as you approached the building, you were surrounded by small, thin bones - birds actually fell clean out of the sky.

See, I would have just given them a super magical chameleon tongue, and let hilarity ensue, butt your idea is good too.

I see Tarrasques as being basically Doomsday from Superman. You kill them one way; they come back and evolve so that you can't do it again. In teh Doomsday/Superman: Predator/Prey book (long title is loooong), Superman finally did what he should of at first and stayed at range and picked him off with laser-vision, so of course Doomsday started firing off his claws on grapples to pull him in.

Of course my plan was also to use teh better Polymorph spell to turn a Tarrasque into a small oriental girl and then use it to kill people. Really it could be any small innocuous creature (I believe they suggested The Deadly

Tarrasque-Bunny in Dragon Magazine), however J-horror has taught me that small oriental girls are super-creepy, and that Tarrasque-Sadako punching people through walls would be hilarious.

08-29-2009, 09:46 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Another possibility that occurs to me as a subsidiary of the first point is that the Tasloi often just abandon female babies in the forest.

Could be a nice little poser for a party: female baby Tasloi found in the forest - what do you do with it? You can't take her with you, and she's at least nominally "evil", but can you in good conscience leave her to die?

That's one of the things I was thinking about for option #1 "These goblin-types could frequently kill their females, viewing their lives of little worth."

Considering there have been quite a few human cultures which exposed unwanted babies, it may be the most likely explanation.

08-30-2009, 06:48 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

See, I would have just given them a super magical chameleon tongue, and let hilarity ensue,

Yeah, that would have been a little more subtle. The fix in 4e is sloppy - it's there because the freeform nature of tabletop gaming made it possible for clever players to defeat a theoretically unstoppable monster by making use of available resources rather than by slugging it out CRPG style. I think that's what bugs me the most - it's like they realized that the nature of the game permitted players to solve a problem in an unplanned fashion, and decided to prevent that by the most direct means necessary. As though clever use of resources was a bug rather than a feature.

I read the Tasloi entry again and I have to say that the idea of setting up traps along escape routes from the lairs of more dangerous critters is a nice touch. It'd be cruel as all hell, though. I don't know if I'd have the heart to ambush players hard on the heels of a retreat.

08-30-2009, 07:50 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

I read the Tasloi entry again and I have to say that the idea of setting up traps along escape routes from the lairs of more dangerous critters is a nice touch. It'd be cruel as all hell, though. I don't know if I'd have the heart to ambush players hard on the heels of a retreat.

Tucker's tasloi? The players would quickly grow to hate the vicious little trap-making bastards in the jungle.

I always kind of liked the tasloi. The picture in the original MM2 made them appear like weird, mostly hairless but bulbous-headed and spindly-limbed little humans. Almost *Homo floresiensis*, or pygmies from Africa or southeast Asia. They fit a needed niche. A strange, almost-familiar but strangely different figure. Humans, twisted. Adapted to an alien environment, the terrifying drums and ululating screams in the jungle. A chittering almost-language in the trees. The embodiment of the darkest fears of the colonial Europeans. Lots of pulpish potential.

08-30-2009, 08:43 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Tucker's tasloi? The players would quickly grow to hate the vicious little trap-making bastards in the jungle.

Worse. You run out of the jungle temple, bleeding and singed, after being routed by Tucker's kobolds. You take the safe-looking path towards a secure location, dragging your unconscious comrade, and *then* they jump you.

08-30-2009, 11:39 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I always kind of liked the tasloi. The picture in the original MM2 made them appear like weird, mostly hairless but bulbous-headed and spindly-limbed little humans. Almost *Homo floresiensis*, or pygmies from Africa or southeast Asia. They fit a needed niche. A strange, almost-familiar but strangely different figure. Humans, twisted. Adapted to an alien environment, the terrifying drums and ululating screams in the jungle. A chittering almost-language in the trees. The embodiment of the darkest fears of the colonial Europeans. Lots of pulpish potential.

In watching the Mummy Returns, I thought of tasloi when those oddball jungle-in-the-desert pygmy mummies showed up.

08-30-2009, 08:08 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

As was mentioned in the su-monster, the tasloi have one huge weakness against adventuring parties- their trees are flammable. What keeps the PCs from burning down that section of forest?

08-30-2009, 11:04 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Jungles don't burn easily.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

In watching the Mummy Returns, I thought of tasloi when those oddball jungle-in-the-desert pygmy mummies showed up.

Definitely creepy. I approve.

08-30-2009, 11:30 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

I did think the grounding aura was a slightly, ah, obvious solution to the problem of getting picked to death by flyers. I used the City of the Tarrasque in my 4e game, however, and it permitted the super-fun additional creepy dynamic that, as you approached the building, you were surrounded by small, thin bones - birds actually fell clean out of the sky.

Yes, it is a bit kludgy. Upon reflection, I prefer the same solution as the Incredible Hulk uses...

Give the Tarrasque super-leaping!

It'd be worth it just for the look on the players' faces when they see the Tarrasque leap hundreds of feet into the air and bite their flying carpet out from under them (together with one of the PCs legs):D

08-30-2009, 11:35 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

I read the Tasloi entry again and I have to say that the idea of setting up traps along escape routes from the lairs of more dangerous critters is a nice touch. It'd be cruel as all hell, though. I don't know if I'd have the heart to ambush players hard on the heels of a retreat.

Well, I'd probably ameliorate it by having the Tasloi try to capture the party with nets rather than kill them. Then, assuming they succeed, they can sell the PCs as slaves, keep them to sacrifice to the Dark Gods (or a neighbouring Tabaxi Lord) on the next full moon, hold them for ransom *et cetera*.

That way they can plot to escape, use their back-up characters for a rescue mission, get adopted by the Tasloi *et cetera*.

08-30-2009, 11:42 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

In watching the Mummy Returns, I thought of tasloi when those oddball jungle-in-the-desert pygmy mummies showed up.

Hmm... that makes me think of Undead Tasloi!

Not mummies though, I don't feel that's quite right. More like a Tasloi version of a ghoul or vampire spawn: able to fly through the trees, shape change into a bat or monkey (or a monkey-bat!), and inflict a supernaturally potent form of rabies with their bite.

And obviously, there will be a demonic "Tasloi Lord" back in the rotting remains of the Tasloi village commanding them all, a creature with the size and pleasant personality of a Carnivorous Ape.

08-31-2009, 12:02 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**
Jungles don't burn easily.

You know what does burn though? Maximised Web spells fired into the forest canopy, that's what!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Yes, it is a bit kludgy. Upon reflection, I prefer the same solution as the Incredible Hulk uses...

Yeah, throw a bus at them!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Give the Tarrasque super-leaping!

Ow. Well I guess that works as well.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
It'd be worth it just for the look on the players' faces when they see the Tarrasque leap hundreds of feet into the air and bite their flying carpet out from under them (together with one of the PCs legs):D

Bite their carpet, lol!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Hmm... that makes me think of Undead Tasloi!

Not mummies though, I don't feel that's quite right. More like a Tasloi version of a ghoul or vampire spawn: able to fly through the trees, shape change into a bat or monkey (or a monkey-bat!), and inflict a supernaturally potent form of rabies with their bite.

And obviously, there will be a demonic "Tasloi Lord" back in the rotting remains of the Tasloi village commanding them all, a creature with the size and pleasant personality of a Carnivorous Ape.

I think that the most important thing to remember about evil monkeys is that they are monkeys and they are evil.

Everything else should follow on from that...

Vampire evil monkeys? Well vampires are evil, evil monkeys are evil.

Cannibals? Well that's evil*, rite?

Evil rat-monkeys? Well evil rats are evil, evil monkeys are evil.

*Except in the game I am currently writing where cannibalism has been rebranded as recycling.

08-31-2009, 12:09 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well, I'd probably ameliorate it by having the Tasloi try to capture the party with nets rather than kill them. Then, assuming they succeed, they can sell the PCs as slaves, keep them to sacrifice to the Dark Gods (or a neighbouring Tabaxi Lord) on the next full moon, hold them for ransom et cetera.

Nets with nasty little hooks woven into every junction. Each dipped in arrow frog venom, or painted with a sticky, foul herbal concoction that causes nerve damage.

In a world with "superhero" fighters who are tougher and have greater damage output than an entire military unit, and mages who can toss around *lightning bolts* all day with impunity, the humanoids who oppose them have to be smart, stealthy, and utterly ruthless guerilla fighters. The tasloi are the Viet Kong. Tunnels and sharpened stakes. Disguised among the humans or hiding under wicker mats in the cowed local villages. Masters of disinformation. Tasloi children running up to adventurers and hugging them close as they slam two balls from a *necklace of fireballs* together. Prisoners in the internment camps can expect a short and horrible life.

08-31-2009, 12:44 PM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Jungles don't burn easily.

People (and by 'people' I mean 'me, possibly others but I can't vouch for them') have an impression of tropical terrain as sunny and thus dry. But there's a reason jungle is more properly known as rainforest - lush tropical terrain is so almost entirely because of the buckets and buckets of water that fall on it all the time, in turn due to the increased heat.

So really, there should be a lot more lightning and mist monsters in the jungles. Things flickering with energy half-glimpsed between shifting sheets of fog, sparks spitting every time a drop from the upper canopy spills onto them...

08-31-2009, 08:05 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

People (and by 'people' I mean 'me, possibly others but I can't vouch for them') have an impression of tropical terrain as sunny and thus dry. But there's a reason jungle is more properly known as rainforest - lush tropical terrain is so almost entirely because of the buckets and buckets of water that fall on it all the time, in turn due to the increased heat.

And how does that relate to magical fire? Incendiary cloud has a large area of effect and can dry out the trees (and vines and epiphytes) before reducing them to ash over those 5 (?) rounds.

08-31-2009, 08:20 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Monkeys burn easily.
And hilariously.

09-01-2009, 02:27 AM

Wakshaani

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have *so* got to catch up on these threads.

Arg!

09-01-2009, 09:53 AM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

And how does that relate to magical fire? Incendiary cloud has a large area of effect and can dry out the trees (and vines and epiphytes) before reducing them to ash over those 5 (?) rounds.

I am not a vegetable pyrologist (or whatever qualification one actually needs for this field of expertise), but I would imagine sustained weapons-grade fire would do the trick. The steam would be unimaginably horrendous, though - I would not be surprised to see hundreds of tonnes of water within the radius of a standard AOE spell. And a simple Fireball, while it would knock things down easily enough, probably wouldn't actually manage to set fire to anything in that environment.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Monkeys burn easily.
And hilariously.

You read The Goon too? "I like them best when they catch fire."

09-01-2009, 10:47 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

And a simple Fireball, while it would knock things down easily enough, probably wouldn't actually manage to set fire to anything in that environment.

Fireball doesn't create any pressure, so probably not.

And I am I the only one who feels as though Tasloi and Su-Monsters go together? I don't know why, but they've always been linked in my mind.

09-01-2009, 10:59 AM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Fireball doesn't create any pressure, so probably not.

And I am I the only one who feels as though Tasloi and Su-Monsters go together? I don't know why, but they've always been linked in my mind.

I know that Fireball should, ideally, be almost utterly useless in this environment, but I *like* Fireball, and restricting its destructicity because of moist trees seemed a little unfair. Basically, if in doubt, let something explode but good, I say.

As for monster combos... has anyone listed all the ape monsters and tried to build a world around them? I don't have the necessary data to hand, but there is plenty 'nuff stuff in this book to build a rocking Edgar Rice Burroughs-style world with nary an orc or elf in sight, methinks.

09-01-2009, 01:01 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

I know that Fireball should, ideally, be almost utterly useless in this environment, but I *like* Fireball, and restricting its destructicity because of moist trees seemed a little unfair. Basically, if in doubt, let something explode but good, I say.

As for monster combos... has anyone listed all the ape monsters and tried to build a world around them? I don't have the necessary data to hand, but there is plenty 'nuff stuff in this book to build a rocking Edgar Rice Burroughs-style world with nary an orc or elf in sight, methinks.

Methinks so too. Get on it, somebody!

09-01-2009, 08:18 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

And I am I the only one who feels as though Tasloi and Su-Monsters go together? I don't know why, but they've always been linked in my mind.

I do and I mentioned it back in the su-monster posts.

09-01-2009, 09:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Monkeys burn easily.

And hilariously.

Well, I'm now thinking those Undead Tasloi need to be *Flaming* Vampire Undead Ghoul Monkey-Bats Humanoids.:p

That ought to learn those jungle arsonists!:D

09-01-2009, 09:27 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

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Great idea! Just of the top of my head we've got:

Carnivorous Apes (Man-Eating Monkeys!)

Gargantuan Carnivorous Apes (Oonga! AD&D's answer to King Kong)

Gorillas

Chimpanzees

Su-Monsters (Pyschic Psycho Monkeys!)

Hsing-Sing (White-furred sapient apes that are expert with ropes & lassoes. They're normally peaceable, but go *crazy* at a certain time of year.)

Monkey Spiders (They'll bite your eyes out)

Yetis (Look at the **picture**, there's no denying they're a kind of ape)

Gorilla-Bears

Gorillons (Try our new improved Carnivorous Ape, now with bonus extra arms!)

Tasloi (Obviously)

Bar-Igura (Demon Monkeys!)

Demogorgon (Well, he's got baboon's heads, hasn't he.)

And there's sure to be more of them. I vaguely remember an AD&D race that looked like a bushbaby, but I can't remember what they were called.

09-01-2009, 09:53 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

There is the phantom from BD&D and the dakon from the FF (with very powerful claws).

09-02-2009, 04:07 AM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

You can see small versions of most of the Planscape illustrations on Sferopedia (their tanar'ri page is [here](#)). Unfortunately, the site's in Czech (at least I *think* it's Czech, not being able to read any Eastern European or Slavic languages), so is hard for non-speakers to navigate.

Appears to be Polish, actually - it's full of ogonek'd vowels, slashed l's, and dotted sibilants, none of which exist in Czech, AFAIK.

09-02-2009, 04:38 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Great idea! Just of the top of my head we've got:

Snip list

And there's sure to be more of them. I vaguely remember an AD&D race that looked like a bushbaby, but I can't remember what they were called.

The biggest impediment is that most of the ape-style enemies are somewhat similar, behavior-and-tactics wise. I'd have trouble running more than one adventure with an ape theme.

09-02-2009, 05:14 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

The biggest impediment is that most of the ape-style enemies are somewhat similar, behavior-and-tactics wise. I'd have trouble running more than one adventure with an ape theme.

Chittering death from the trees. Net-weavers and trappers with small sharp spears. They grow exotic lotuses in hydroponic-like gardens at the very top of the foliage. Black and green noxious fumes falls like a misty rain to the ground cover below when they are distilling the nightshade into a potent poison.

Skittering things hidden in the canopy. Curious stalkers, they parallel groups of humanoids in the forest. The racket they cause and the occasional piece of feces they fling ruins the chances of any would-be hunters or scouts. At the end of the day or when the leaves and branches block out the sky and leave only a shiftng green twilight, they sneak into camps to smash bottles and steal shiny things before scampering off.

Cave-dwelling albinos with powerful arms. Chest-pounding tear-you-limb from limb furious packs that terrorize their neighbors. Their language is indecipherable, but they somehow communicate because every once in a while they descend from their cold hard homes and great jumping hordes rend and tear and smash entire villages to pieces.

Fiercely territorial packs. Constant grooming and sex tied them together with velvet bonds into extended soap opera-like family groups, but they are clannish and hostile to any strangers. To keep their families safe, they use bluster, intimidation, lure and swarm group tactics, and, if necessary, they simply pick up their few belongings and scatter into the forest, never to return.

Giant tribes of lumbering, wise old silverbacks who are reflective and philosophical plant-eaters. Secretive and reclusive, it is rumored the distant drumming is the only sign of their existence.

An arboreal brachiating species with a tail almost like a fifth limb, who spend half their time hanging or upside down, even while talking to strangers. Known as cunning merchants, they are intensely vocal.... and very, very loud. Their flapping cheek-pouches turn into bellows as they howl and scream and berate their employees for even the slightest perceived failing.

09-02-2009, 07:25 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

You read The Goon too? "I like them best when they catch fire."

No, though I have herd of it (they are supposed to be making a film or summint). I am just a believer in the comedy potential of burning monkeys.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well, I'm now thinking those Undead Tasloi need to be *Flaming* Vampire Undead Ghoul Monkey-Bats Humanoids.:p

That ought to learn those jungle arsonists!:D

That would indeed be an evil monkey.

Ah, but they would probably be Ghost Flaming Monkey-Bats! Created from the burning of regular Evil Monkeys by adventures who think that burning monkeys are really funny.

09-02-2009, 09:28 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Chittering death from the trees. Net-weavers and trappers with small sharp spears. They grow exotic lotuses in hydroponic-like gardens at the very top of the foliage. Black and green noxious fumes falls like a misty rain to the ground cover below when they are distilling the nightshade into a potent poison.

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Don't forget gargantuan gorillas worshipped as demigods by primitive tribes in the rain forest.

09-02-2009, 12:55 PM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Don't forget gargantuan gorillas worshipped as demigods by primitive tribes in the rain forest.

Yep. The normal D&D spirit is to provide new challenges and new mechanics through a weird new thing with tentacles and eyes, but there's plenty of room for drama simply dealing with other humans.

Or other sentient beings, in this case, although it wouldn't be as simple to stack PC levels onto monsters in 2e rules, I expect.

ERB demonstrated that you can do perfect high adventure with a couple of unusual cultures, a woman, and some angry, angry monkeys. Even on Mars, John Carter fights some white apes early on. There's nothing ruling out the occasional jaguar or T-Rex, but they should be special, methinks.

EDIT: Also, animal companion: faithful chimpanzee. That is so much cooler than a wolf, no?

09-03-2009, 04:49 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

There is the phantom from BD&D and the dakon from the FF (with very powerful claws).

The Phanaton was the one I was trying to remember the name of, they're kind of raccoon/bush babies with a gliding squirrel style wing membrane. While they did first appear in Isle of the Dread, they do have official AD&D stats too.

Don't remember much about the Dakon, despite it having its own Ecology article in Dragon. I have a vague memory of some kind of winged ape, but I suspect I'm actually thinking of Moorcock's Clakkars.

Anyway, I'll add them to post #307's list.

ADDENDUM: After checking my Dragon back-issues and the Dakon's basically a peaceful talking gorilla. I half-suspected my memory was failing me, or it was wishful thinking. After all, Ape World really needs flying killer gorillas.

Oh, and apparently Clakkars only have one "k". That just doesn't look right to me.

Quote:

Updated List:

Carnivorous Apes (Man-Eating Monkeys!)

Gargantuan Carnivorous Apes (Oonga! AD&D's answer to King Kong)

Gorillas

Chimpanzees

Su-Monsters (Pyschic Psycho Monkeys!)

Hsing-Sing (White-furred sapient apes that are expert with ropes & lassoes. They're normally peaceable, but go *crazy* at a certain time of year.)

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Tasloi (Obviously)

Bar-Igura (Demon Monkeys!)

Demogorgon (Well, he's got baboon's heads, hasn't he.)

Extra! Extra!

Phanaton (Gliding raccoon-monkeys)

Dakon (Peaceful tribal talking gorillas)

09-03-2009, 04:53 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Don't forget gargantuan gorillas worshipped as demigods by primitive tribes in the rain forest.

That's already covered by the Gargantuan Carnivorous Apes in Gygax's *Isle of the Ape*.

09-03-2009, 05:00 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**
That would indeed be an evil monkey.

Ah, but they would probably be Ghost Flaming Monkey-Bats! Created from the burning of regular Evil Monkeys by adventures who think that burning monkeys are really funny

Actually, that's what I had in mind, except I was thinking it's the result of them burning the "regular" Evil Undead Monkey-Men.:o

You know how it goes: kill the evil monkey men and they come back as ghoulish undead, burn the ghoulish undead and they come back as flaming ghosts, capture all the flaming ghosts in a spirit-prison and their souls fuse together and burst out as one 300 foot tall soul-eating spectral demon ape god.

It happens all the time, but the wizards covers it up.:)

09-03-2009, 05:48 AM

Wooster

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Kech were some sort of ape-like creatures, weren't they?

09-03-2009, 11:45 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Thought-Eater

What is this that comes towards us, swimming through the ether? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it the stragely malformed skeleton of a duckbilled platypus? No, it is a Thought-Eater, terror of the ethereal plane and scourge of psionicists and wizards. Flee its deadly psuedo-marsupial form!

Anyway, Thought-Eaters. They press a minor irritative button with me in that there's a ton of stuff in the entry that only applies to psionicists and doesn't make an ounce of sense if you don't have the Psionics Handbook. This makes this monster a candidate for removal from the MM and insertion in the Psionics book, if you ask me. But we're stuck with it, I suppose.

And the Thought-Eater isn't a bad concept - a wandering interplanar...well... thought eater, basically. Hoovering up psionic powers, memorised spells and intelligence like a....well.... hoover. The entry manages to both come up with simultaneously cool and ridiculous adventure hooks (like all the other entries, then):

Cool - When a Thought-Eater dies it drops out of the ethereal plane to the prime material, where it resembles an ordinary platypus skeleton.

Ridiculous - Sages (ah, sages) speculate that Thought-Eaters are "the final fate of psionicists, once they die."

A Thought-Eater would make a great pet for some evil king or archmage, as they essentially destroy magical and psionic ability at will.

09-03-2009, 12:44 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Flee its deadly psuedo-marsupial form!

They're from further back down the evolutionary tree. The ancestors of the platypus split off before the first live-bearing mammal appeared with either a pouch or a placenta. They're monotremes, not a marsupials.

09-03-2009, 12:46 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**
They're from further back down the evolutionary tree. The ancestors of the platypus split off before the first live-bearing mammal appeared with either a pouch or a placenta. They're monotremes, not a marsupials.

Pedant! ;)

09-03-2009, 12:58 PM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

On the subject of evolution - how do you end up with a thought-eating predator? The sages are unreliable on this one. Not even the old standby of an "engineered species." So what creates a species that is constantly and desperately seeking nourishment? I mean are we looking at the psychic equivalent of those shrews that need to eat constantly to stay alive, or what?

09-03-2009, 01:06 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Since it *is* an astral being, perhaps it began life as the weird-ass nightmare of a powerful but not particularly disciplined psionic wild talent?

09-03-2009, 01:52 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Pedant! ;)

You type that like it's a bad thing. :confused: Shame on you! ;)

09-03-2009, 01:56 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wooster**

Kech were some sort of ape-like creatures, weren't they?

Not particularly. They're skinny arboreal carnivorous humanoids covered in little triangular green scales. I imagine them as having scales like a pangolin's, horny plates that used to be hair, except covered in algae for camouflage, like a sloth. I quite liked Kech for some reason, so my players ran into them a couple of times.

09-03-2009, 02:05 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

On the subject of evolution - how do you end up with a thought-eating predator? The sages are unreliable on this one. Not even the old standby of an "engineered species." So what creates a species that is constantly and desperately seeking nourishment? I mean are we looking at the psychic equivalent of those shrews that need to eat constantly to stay alive, or what?

Maybe the sages are half-right?

The thought eaters are all that remain of a once noble, highly intelligent species that sought to escape their dying planet by astral projection. Some of their projected souls lost their "silver cord" connection with their bodies, but somehow they did not die but slowly dwindled. Without bodies, they lost their source of psionic energy so had to find it from somewhere, and developed the ability of tapping Prime Material beings of their mind-force. How their much reduced descendants developed the ability to reproduce is the great puzzle. Some think they can now project material bodies into the warm lakes and rivers of an unknown world, were they mate and lay eggs. Others that they breed on the ethereal plane by joining their energies to create tulpa-like thought-forms, that eventually gain independence and real substance.

09-03-2009, 03:07 PM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The ruins of a lost psychic platypus race *would* be a pretty unusual little dungeon.

AUS1 - "The Pyramids of the Monotreme Monarchs!"

Working with the other ideas:

Thought-Eaters have large natural PSP pools, but these are sufficient to sustain them for 50 hours on average. They relentlessly stalk first actively-used psionic and magical energy and only then begin to feed on latent sources. This makes them apparently adapted to stalk the use of energy rather than its presence. What if shaped energy is more easily digested?

Thought Eaters aren't the remains of the noble society, they're its bogeyman. A highly intelligent and creative society of artisans using psionic and magical crafting methods to work their environment (because they lacked hands.) Thought-Eaters are the nightmare conceived of by this society - they are attracted to shaped energy first and foremost and "hollow out" victims through the annihilation of mental activity. Rather than valuing immortality-through-creation, they exist only to persist.

09-03-2009, 05:11 PM

Wooster

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Not particularly. They're skinny arboreal carnivorous humanoids covered in little triangular green scales. I imagine them as having scales like a pangolin's, horny plates that used to be hair, except covered in algae for camouflage, like a sloth. I quite liked Kech for some reason, so my players ran into them a couple of times.

Oh, all right. They may have a touch of kobold-itis (are they dogs? tiny dragons? to gnomes what orcs are to elves?), then, in the sense that different folks portray them differently, because I always got the impression that we were dealing with angry, somewhat intelligent apemen covered in leaves.

09-03-2009, 08:46 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wooster**

Oh, all right. They may have a touch of kobold-itis (are they dogs? tiny dragons? to gnomes what orcs are to elves?), then, in the sense that different folks portray them differently, because I always got the impression that we were dealing with angry, somewhat intelligent apemen covered in leaves.

Yup, their green scales resemble leaves, giving them excellent camouflage in trees. If I recall correctly, their Monster Manual II write-up doesn't give any clues as to their nature & origin, just some fluff about some jungle folk saying they're "forest demons", nor does it explicitly say they're reptilian, like a D&D kobold.

We could probably throw them into the "Ape-thing" pile, since even if its uncertain whether they are some kind of primate it seems likely, since they are human-shape probable mammals with prehensile hands and feet. If we can include Bar-Igura, Demogorgon, Yeti and Gorillar-Bears we can certainly throw in Kech!

Besides, I liked to throw Kech at my players.

I'll add them to the list.

Quote:

Updated List:

Carnivorous Apes (Man-Eating Monkeys!)

Gargantuan Carnivorous Apes (Oonga! AD&D's answer to King Kong)

Gorillas

Chimpanzees

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Tasloi (Obviously)

Bar-Igura (Demon Monkeys!)

Demogorgon (Well, he's got baboons' heads, hasn't he.)

Extra! Extra!

Phanaton (Gliding raccoon-monkeys)

Dakon (Peaceful tribal talking gorillas)

Kech (Leafy-scaled murderous hominids)

Things To Add

"Clakkars" (Moorcock's Winged Apemen. Nothing like them in D&D AFAIK, but there should be, or alternatively...)

Flying Killer Monkeys (Fly my pretties! Not in D&D, but we need them!)

09-04-2009, 08:05 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

Thought-Eaters have large natural PSP pools, but these are sufficient to sustain them for 50 hours on average. They relentlessly stalk first actively-used psionic and magical energy and only then begin to feed on latent sources. This makes them apparently adapted to stalk the use of energy rather than its presence. What if shaped energy is more easily digested?

Hmm... That raises an interesting questions.

A thought eater has to feed every few days or it becomes too weak to remain ethereal, and dies. So, what psychic creatures does a thought eater feed on, and how does it find them?

A thought eater swims through the ether slowly, but over 50 hours it could travel ~100 miles since, IIRC, ethereal travel is tireless. That's a fair distance, comparable how far a wolf or cat may travel over 4 days of patrolling its territory. But a thought eater is after far rarer prey than mice or caribou, psionic creatures are few and far between, most being rare or very rare. So, the thought eater must either live in a place with an unusual concentration of them, or be able to sense psionics from very far away. Unfortunately its MM entry does not give a range for its "psionic sense", but a brain mole can sense psionics over 200 yards, and it is psychically weaker than a thought eater. (Psi score 12 & PSP 100 versus Psi score 18 and PSP 101-200)

So, assuming it senses psionic creatures from great distances and makes a bee-line for them, that suggests thought eaters could be found anywhere, and are more likely to be encountered in densely populated areas. The more sapient minds, the more likelihoods of psychics to feed upon. A lot of thought eaters may live in cities, swimming ethereally through, above or underneath the building, passing effortlessly through solid matter to feed upon citizens with wild talents. Bouts of madness, catatonia or plain tiredness may not be due to the stress of city living, but invisible psychic predation.

Thought eaters also hunt in Dungeons. Apart from having an unusual number of psionic prey (Su-Monsters, Ustilagors, adventurers etc), a thought eater has great manoeuvrability advantage in a Dungeon. It can fly through walls, doors or solid rock, its prey have to follow tortuous corridors, and deal with traps and barriers.

Speaking of prey, many psionic creatures should make troublesome targets for a thought eater. Consider some of the Monstrous Manual's psionic monsters:

A Mind Flayer is way out of a thought-eater's league. It would just *plane shift* into the ether and suck the platypus-thing's brain out. Any other psionic creature able to enter the ethereal plane is similarly deadly to a thought eater, such as a Shedû, Intellect Devourer using astral projection, most Demons with psionic powers, et cetera).

A Couatl is psionic and has no innate means of attacking a thought eater, but it's a lot faster, so can simply fly or teleport away. If the thought eater only gets a couple of rounds of feeding, that's only 6 or 7 more hours of life. A Couatl (or any other fast creature) only needs to keep out of range and let the creature starve to death.

So, a thought eater needs prey that can't become ethereal to attack it, and can't flee fast enough to escape. A Brain Mole seems a perfect victim. They're even slower than a thought eater (3" vs 6") and have no way of counter-attacking. Unfortunately, they're even rarer than thought eaters (rare vs very rare). Maybe thought eater predation is why Brain Moles are so rare?

09-04-2009, 08:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Here are a few other thoughts I came up with while musings over thought eater ecology.

Consider the first and last sentences of the thought eater's Monstrous Manual description:

Ethereal Natives... or *Space Aliens*?

The description begins "Thought eaters are natives of the Border Ethereal" there's some suggestion they're not, for why do they fall into the Prime Material when they run out of juice? Surely, if they were ethereal natives, like ghosts, they'd just stay on that plane and need effort to interact with the Material?

Perhaps they're actually native to some freefall environment somewhere out in Space / the Phlogiston, and its gravity they can't survive? I'm imagining a Spelljammer ship discovering the "Reef of the Thought Eaters".

Dead Platypi?

The Thought Eater MM entry's final line ends saying these monster's corpses "are usually dismissed as platypi that died from starvation". Now apart from outrage about how that's not how you spell the plural of platypus, how can platypuses (or platypodes) be so abundant that when you find the skeleton of one on a dungeon floor you just wave it away? Furthermore, platypuses live in streams - what of thought eater skeletons found far from water? It's obvious nonsense.

No, it's far more likely the reverse misidentification will occur. Enough people with see invisible spells will have described the ethereal creatures that suck the wits and power out of mind-mages for thought eaters to be as well known as, say, intellect devourers. Platypuses, on the other hand may be very rare beasts only found on a far away shore, and when the first AD&D explorers discover them can you imagine their reaction:

"What's that?"

"It looks a bit like... oh Pelor preserve us! It's a thought eater!! They've found a way to live in the Prime Material plane"

"By my hammer, look how fat it is, all the other ones I've seen have been naught but skin and bones. It must have sucked the mind out of everyone for leagues around and is so full it does not want to feed on us!"

"Quick! Kill it!! Kill it!!!"

Adventure Seed: Murder by Thought Eater!

Finally, I realized that thought eaters would make great assassination weapons against psionic targets.

Just think, all a 9th+ level evil wizard need do is turn ethereal, grab three or five thought eaters (if the wizard is non-psionic, there is literally nothing a thought eater can do to defend itself) and transport them through the Border Ethereal to wherever its victim is.

Say, he's attacking a Gem Dragon. These psionic dragons are impressive in the Material world, but very few have any means of affecting or entering the ether. A few thought eaters would drain one mindless in a handful of rounds. All the wizard needs is a wicker cage to keep the thought eaters in and some means of keeping up with a flying dragon, and they'll have mindless dragons and a horde for the taking.

No wonder Gem Dragons are rarer than Metallic or Chromatic ones.

The same tactic could also be used against, say, a noblewoman with a wild talent. Leaving her servants to find a drooling vegetable in her bed.

09-04-2009, 10:49 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

... Now apart from outrage about how that's not how you spell the plural of platypus, how can platypuses (or platypodes) ...

Huzzah!

09-04-2009, 04:01 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Huzzah!

Ta Kojiro. I thought of you when I typed it.:cool: ;)

09-05-2009, 03:25 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

No, it's far more likely the reverse misidentification will occur. Enough people with see invisible spells will have described the ethereal creatures that suck the wits and power out of mind-mages for thought eaters to be as well known as, say, intellect devourers. Platypuses, on the other hand may be very rare beasts only found on a far away shore, and when the first AD&D explorers discover them can you imagine their reaction:

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"It looks a bit like... oh Pelor preserve us! It's a thought eater!! They've found a way to live in the Prime Material plane"

"By my hammer, look how fat it is, all the other ones I've seen have been naught but skin and bones. It must have sucked the mind out of everyone for leagues around and is so full it does not want to feed on us!"

"Quick! Kill it!! Kill it!!!"

The problem with that is that a platypus in the wild is extraordinarily difficult to spot. They're reclusive, they mostly live underwater (feeding off the bottom of rivers, and the entrance of their burrows is below the waterline), and they're very stealthy. I doubt that most adventurers would even notice a nearby platypus.

The last time I went to the zoo, I found it really hard to spot a platypus in its enclosure, and I was *looking* for an animal I knew to be there.

09-05-2009, 05:53 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sim_james**

The problem with that is that a platypus in the wild is extraordinarily difficult to spot. They're reclusive, they mostly live underwater (feeding off the bottom of rivers, and the entrance of their burrows is below the waterline), and they're very stealthy. I doubt that most adventurers would even notice a nearby platypus.

Perfectly true, although I would counter with:

- 1) Adventurers have really good Spot skills, and are always exploring holes in the ground.
- 2) It wouldn't be funny to go "what was that ripple in the water?" ... "Who cares, it's only a fish."

;)

09-05-2009, 09:40 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Perfectly true, although I would counter with:

- 1) Adventurers have really good Spot skills, and are always exploring holes in the ground.

And I counter with!

- 1) It's *underwater*. Adventurers hate going underwater. :p That's why all of those really cool aquatic monsters get so little use!

09-06-2009, 04:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sim_james**

And I counter with!

- 1) It's *underwater*. Adventurers hate going underwater. :p That's why all of those really cool aquatic monsters get so little use!

Well most of their burrow is dry, it's just the entrance that's usually underwater.

Some players I've known have certainly hated underwater adventures, and it's a shame those cool aquatic beasts don't get much love. Although a few of them are overrated, I ran an *Architeuthis* up against my PCs and it went out like a damp squib(d). :p

Anyway, maybe we're looking at this the wrong way. Perhaps those plump, secretive duck-billed platypodes are really interdimensional mind eaters, not the harmless insect-grubbers they appear. Each is connected via an undetectable silver cord to its ethereal Siamese twin, a Thought Eater. Most platypuses that die of unidentified illnesses have actually had their Ethereal Halves killed by adventurers, ghosts or psionic starvation.

09-06-2009, 04:26 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Anyway, maybe we're looking at this the wrong way. Perhaps those plump, secretive duck-billed platypuses are really inter-dimensional mind eaters, not the harmless insect-grubbers they appear. Each is connected via an undetectable silver cord to its ethereal Siamese twin, a Thought Eater. Most platypuses that die of unidentified illnesses have actually had their Ethereal Halves killed by adventurers, ghosts or psionic starvation.

Or perhaps platypuses are just the day jobs of the Thought Eaters? It's what they do in-between driving the local Brain Moles into extinction, living underwater and occasionally poisoning passers-by. The reason dead thought eaters look like dead platypuses is that they are the **SAME ANIMAL**, and it's only because no sages have actually looked into it that no-one has put two and two together yet. Adventurers are the only ones even remotely likely to have seen both animals but people who go into evil twisted dungeons for fun don't often make these vital connections, and if they do, no-one listens to them unless they are buying the drinks.

Friend of mine had a job studying platypuses, but got poisoned by one on the second day. Quite nasty stuff... Perhaps platypus venom screws with psionic powers.

Not that I ever bother using them, both platypuses and psionic powers.

09-06-2009, 04:51 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hmm. Maybe getting stung by the venom of an Underdark-irradiated platypus gives you psionic powers?

Cue a hooded drow hiring a party of adventurers to bring her some live platypi...

09-06-2009, 06:09 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Or perhaps platypuses are just the day jobs of the Thought Eaters? It's what they do in-between driving the local Brain Moles into extinction, living underwater and occasionally poisoning passers-by. The reason dead thought eaters look like dead platypuses is that they are the **SAME ANIMAL**, and it's only because no sages have actually looked into it that no-one has put two and two together yet. Adventurers are the only ones even remotely likely to have seen both animals but people who go into evil twisted dungeons for fun don't often make these vital connections, and if they do, no-one listens to them unless they are buying the drinks.

Friend of mine had a job studying platypuses, but got poisoned by one on the second day. Quite nasty stuff... Perhaps platypus venom screws with psionic powers.

Not that I ever bother using them, both platypuses and psionic powers.

Hmm, that would mean that we live on the mysterious alternative prime material plane that was one of my suggested breeding grounds for Thought Eaters!

As for the venom, Thought Eaters are not venomous but that's easily explained: It's only the *male* duck-billed platypus that has poison spurs, so all Thought Eaters encountered are *female*. They could be like mosquitoes, except they need to drain psionic energy instead of blood to develop their eggs.

I like both ideas!

09-06-2009, 09:30 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

To those commenting on the difficulty of finding psionic victims to feed upon, remember that Thought-Eaters can also devour spells and generic Intelligence points. They always struck me as monsters that would be hard to actually work into a game. Until they attack, they're nearly impossible to detect, and they're liable to do catastrophic damage.

I suppose they could put some serious pressure on the PCs - that word of recall you were counting on - it's gone now.

09-07-2009, 04:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

To those commenting on the difficulty of finding psionic victims to feed upon, remember that Thought-Eaters can also devour spells and generic Intelligence points. They always struck me as monsters that would be hard to actually work into a game. Until they attack, they're nearly impossible to detect, and they're liable to do catastrophic damage.

Blast it! For some reason I was thinking they could only devour spells and Intelligence points from non-psionic characters in 1st edition AD&D, but re-reading the Monstrous Manual description they can in 2E as well. That means my assassin with a cage of Thought Eaters ploy will need some psychic protection.

Although it also says "they will also absorb any spell cast in the area" - that's a meaty ability.

Speaking of edition comparisons, the 3rd edition version of the Thought Eater[URL][B] is quite different, both in **appearance** (a ghoulish spiny hawk-headed dog-thing instead of the skeletal platypus we know and love) and **powers** (it pops into the material plane and has to touch you to eat your mind, losing the original's characteristic "attack from the Ether" power).

Personally, I prefer the somewhat goofy charm of the original, although I can see it needed a power cut.

09-07-2009, 04:24 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

To those commenting on the difficulty of finding psionic victims to feed upon, remember that Thought-Eaters can also devour spells and generic Intelligence points.

Obviously, their presence in great, invisible numbers around Earth is why nobody has been able to cast spells or do psionics in centuries... :cool:

09-07-2009, 10:24 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Thri-Kreen

A strangely content-lite entry for what is a fairly major D&D race, this; I'd say about a third of it is devoted to detailed the Hit Dice and THACO of different age categories of Thri-Kreen and their special combat abilities. This means there's much less ecology and cultural information to remark on; we're simply told that Thri-Kreen organise themselves into packs and roam around deserts and savannah hunting for food.

I do like Thri-Kreen, though. What's not to like about a race of praying mantis people? I was always slightly disappointed that the Thri-Kreen don't have the hinged forelimbs which are the signature of their real world cousins. But otherwise it's a perfectly sound concept.

In a way I suppose the lack of a section in which sages expound on bullshit creation myths and cultural mores is a strength in this entry, because it gives Thri-Kreen a sense of mystery which a lot of D&D races don't have. What motivates these strange hunters of the savannah? Where did they come from? What do they produce? All answers for DMs to decide for themselves. (Unless they buy all the Dark Sun setting info...)

There are some "related species": the *Tohr-Kreen*, who are the civilised, cultured version of the barbaric Thri-Kreen (clearly, yet another tilt at the "ancient civilised race laid low by blah blah catastrophe" motif), and the *Xixchil*, spacefaring Thri-Kreen who tantalisingly are described as "skilled surgeons and artificers, who enjoy replacing lost limbs with 'more efficient' substitutes."

09-07-2009, 12:42 PM

Naxuul

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

[There are some "related species": the *Tohr-Kreen*, who are the civilised, cultured version of the barbaric Thri-Kreen (clearly, yet another tilt at the "ancient civilised race laid low by blah blah catastrophe" motif)

Not quite. If my memory is right, the Thri-Kreen aren't the remnants of a destroyed empire, but more like Wood Elves. They're the colonists of a larger empire who went native and rustic. The Tohr-Kreen empire is, in the native Dark Sun setting it comes from, still quite alive and larger, more civilized and more advanced than the native area players come from. Rather than being a fallen empire, the Tohr-Kreen are more like the dangerous new evolution of civilization suited to Athas' blasted world.

-Naxuul

09-07-2009, 04:44 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

There are some "related species": the *Tohr-Kreen*, who are the civilised, cultured version of the barbaric Thri-Kreen (clearly, yet another tilt at the "ancient civilised race laid low by blah blah catastrophe" motif), and the *Xixchil*, spacefaring Thri-Kreen who tantalisingly are described as "skilled surgeons and artificers, who enjoy replacing lost limbs with 'more efficient' substitutes."

Too bad they just stick to more mantisfolk. There's a whole class of anthropomorphic insects to explore. The beetlefolk are nigh-unstoppable juggernauts driven by their ravenous and often disgusting appetites. The cricketfolk become the wise but playful fiddlers, who entertain the Imperial Court. A species of fleafolk live their

entire lifecycle on the tarrasque, flourishing during the sleep cycles and holding tight for survival during the sometimes weeks-long bodyquakes. The termite folk built ancient empires around huge tessellated mounds, and all that remains is dust and the occasional massive chitin-plated relic uncovered by the sand. The peaceful nymphs who for some enigmatic reason occasionally turn darker, grow stronger, and then turn into a berserk horde that cuts a swath through civilization once every couple of generations. The wasps, with their unsavory method of reproduction, have become by necessity assassins-for-hire, who spirit away their victims for their own purposes.

09-07-2009, 05:47 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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I've sometimes thought about developing an anthropomorphic insect setting for D&D, probably for BECM1.

My homebrew setting, Yoon-Suin, has a lot of invertebrate-people.

09-07-2009, 07:53 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Too bad they just stick to more mantisfolk.

There is the aspis but they were relegated to the insect entry (ie almost no write up). Some non-humanoid insectoid peoples would be nice.

When I first read of them in the MM II, I thought of thri-kreen as desert dwelling locusts and never really got away from that. Grasshoppers can be carnivorous and unlike mantids, they can be found in very large swarms.

Xixchil are awesome- they have no sense of human esthetics and so modify people efficiently. In their Ecology, there is mention of a dwarf that has his head used as a muscle anchor point and a woman who wanted feathered wings ends up looking like a werebat in hybrid form.

09-08-2009, 04:59 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Can I just say: SECTAURS FUCK YEAH!!!!

09-08-2009, 09:25 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Xixchil are awesome- they have no sense of human esthetics and so modify people efficently. In their Ecology, there is mention of a dwarf that has his head used as a muscle anchor point and a woman who wanted feathered wings ends up looking like a werebat in hybrid form.

Maybe that's where China Mieville got his idea for the Remade from.

09-08-2009, 09:11 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Xixchil are awesome- they have no sense of human esthetics and so modify people efficently. In their Ecology, there is mention of a dwarf that has his head used as a muscle anchor point and a woman who wanted feathered wings ends up looking like a werebat in hybrid form.

Dwarf with muscles bulging from his skull glowers at DMH, snarling "Human aesthetics? Who ya calling human? Do ya want yer teeth knocked out!" :D

Ahem

Yes, the Thri-Kreen entry is rather short of background detail, it's little different from the 1st edition version.

09-08-2009, 09:26 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Dwarf with muscles bulging from his skull glowers at DMH, snarling "Human aesthetics? Who ya calling human? Do ya want yer teeth knocked out!" :D

Remember the mul? Dwarves are to humans as donkeys are to horses. Maybe that makes gnomes hinnies :).

09-09-2009, 12:45 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Wakboth**

Obviously, their presence in great, invisible numbers around Earth is why nobody has been able to cast spells or do psionics in centuries... :cool:

Well that goes without saying. :)

09-09-2009, 01:17 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

To those commenting on the difficulty of finding psionic victims to feed upon, remember that Thought-Eaters can also devour spells and generic Intelligence points. They always struck me as monsters that would be hard to actually work into a game. Until they attack, they're nearly impossible to detect, and they're liable to do catastrophic damage.

Upon reflection, I remember my reasons for thinking Thought-Eaters can only attack psionic characters, and I think I've got a pretty good case.

The Monstrous Manual entry says "Their only "attack" is their innate ability to absorb psionic energy. They can absorb psionic energy within 60 feet of a true psionist or psionic creature, or within 10 feet of a wild talent." There's nothing about their sole attack affecting other creatures, which means non-psionic beings should be immune.

Here's another thought. A Thought-Eater targets its Prime Material via its psionic sense, right. If a non-psionic opponent enters the ether to attack it, how would the monster know they're there? It doesn't have any visible eyes or ears. I guess their psionic sense could be acute enough to pick up "brain waves".

Finally, I wondered what organ the Thought-Eater gets its psionic sense from. I guess it could be its brain, but I prefer to think it has a psionic-sensitive bill. Platypuses can sense the nerve-firings of small animals with their bill, so it seems reasonable to think Thought-Eaters use their bills to detect the energy emissions of their prey too.

09-09-2009, 10:13 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The Monstrous Manual entry says "Their only "attack" is their innate ability to absorb psionic energy. They can absorb psionic energy within 60 feet of a true psionist or psionic creature, or within 10 feet of a wild talent." There's nothing about their sole attack affecting other creatures, which means non-psionic beings should be immune.

I interpreted that to mean that Thought-Eaters will affect all creatures *if there is a psionist within 60 feet*. In other words, they only "switch on" their attack when there's a psionist about, but it affects everybody else once it's in use.

09-09-2009, 05:47 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

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Yes, I realized that was another interpretation, I just preferred the former. There isn't anything concrete either way.

Ah AD&D, its occasionally vague and contradictory rules are part of the charm. ;)

09-10-2009, 03:17 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I interpreted that to mean that Thought-Eaters will affect all creatures *if there is a psionicist within 60 feet*. In other words, they only "switch on" their attack when there's a psionicist about, but it affects everybody else once it's in use.

If this is the case, the best strategy for a thought eater would be to find a psionic character and start killing everyone else in the vicinity. The non psionic character wouldn't have any way of dealing with a Thought-Eater, unless someone plane shifts over to the ethereal plane. For a group unable to see ethereal things, they may never realize why the psion's buddies keep dying randomly. If thought eaters were more common, psions would be shunned from society (like mages from Dark Sun), since anyone in their presence could die at any moment, regardless of how the psion feels about them.

It would actually be pretty stupid to attack the one creature that can hurt you, if there's defenseless prey nearby.
(Though thought eaters are "basically stupid" so they probably don't strategize much.)

09-10-2009, 03:52 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

If thought eaters were more common, psions would be shunned from society (like mages from Dark Sun), since anyone in their presence could die at any moment, regardless of how the psion feels about them.)

Technically, they wouldn't die, just turn into mindless vegetables. And apparently, psychic surgery can fix that.

09-11-2009, 05:46 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

If this is the case, the best strategy for a thought eater would be to find a psionic character and start killing everyone else in the vicinity. The non psionic character wouldn't have any way of dealing with a Thought-Eater, unless someone plane shifts over to the ethereal plane. For a group

unable to see ethereal things, they may never realize why the psion's buddies keep dying randomly. If thought eaters were more common, psions would be shunned from society (like mages from Dark Sun), since anyone in their presence could die at any moment, regardless of how the psion feels about them.

It would actually be pretty stupid to attack the one creature that can hurt you, if there's defenseless prey nearby.

(Though thought eaters are "basically stupid" so they probably don't strategize much.)

Interesting idea. Although I'd interpret the Monstrous Manual as saying Thought-Eaters drain all valid targets within range indiscriminately, which would prevent the Thought-Eater targeting non-psionics only, I'd like them to be able to target individuals.

Oh, and as for the "basically stupid", they have an effective 18 in all their ability scores for purposes of psionics, so maybe they would act like geniuses if only they could divert themselves from their overwhelming hunger for PSPs. Makes me wonder what would happen if you put a *ring of sustenance* or that nourishment-providing *ioun stone* on a Thought-Eater. Would it start acting like a sapient being, able to think of other things than its immediate need to feed?

09-11-2009, 06:45 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Oh, and as for the "basically stupid", they have an effective 18 in all their ability scores for purposes of psionics, so maybe they would act like geniuses if only they could divert themselves from their overwhelming hunger for PSPs. Makes me wonder what would happen if you put a *ring of sustenance* or that nourishment-providing *ioun stone* on a Thought-Eater. Would it start acting like a sapient being, able to think of other things than its immediate need to feed?

A nigh-untouchable super genius invisible duck thing, who uses a series of low level psionic henchmen to get near his enemies and make them into vegetables. If the PCs can figure out what's happening, then they still need to get into the Ethereal plane and get the ring off of the damned platypus monster.

I could see that as an adventure, though an odd one.

09-15-2009, 08:32 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Imagine how desperately such a one would fight to keep such a ring from being taken from him, devolving him back into a non-sentient being ruled entirely by his basest hungers, not even capable of fathoming the intelligence he is capable of. If one used him as a lesser villain, rather than a major one, that could be an interesting moral dilemma in and of itself.

An Ustilagor and Thought-Eater could work together interestingly - the Intellect Devourer is immune to psionic attacks, and the thought eater could drain the ustilagor's enemies/ abilities before the latter attacks. Of course, they're both unintelligent, but it could make for a nasty encounter.

09-15-2009, 10:22 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

A nigh-untouchable super genius invisible duck thing, who uses a series of low level psionic henchmen to get near his enemies and make them into vegetables. If the PCs can figure out what's happening, then they still need to get into the Ethereal plane and get the ring off of the damned platypus monster.

I could see that as an adventure, though an odd one.

That was my initial concept too, the sapient Thought-Eater as an immaterial super-villain bent on rebuilding the long lost Mind-Empire of the Monotremes or somesuch, but then I asked myself why would it be hostile?

Thought-Eaters only ate minds to survive and our genius Thought-Eater doesn't need to, so it could express its Neutral alignment in all manner of other ways.

Perhaps it's a renowned sage, scholar and philosopher, solving the most obscure problems in return for having rare books and luxuries *plane shifted* into the ether for it to enjoy.

Maybe it's a lover of poetry, music and plays, protecting a particularly controversial troupe of actors and giving rise to stories of a "phantom of opera".

Or, if it's a protector, it could be True Neutral and want to protect nature, teaming up with druids to track down and destroy defilers of the wilderness. A Thought-Eater's ability to spy ethereally, such out minds and cancel spells would make it a very powerful ally.

09-15-2009, 10:40 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

Imagine how desperately such a one would fight to keep such a ring from being taken from him, devolving him back into a non-sentient being ruled entirely by his basest hungers, not even capable of fathoming the intelligence he is capable of. If one used him as a lesser villain, rather than a major one, that could be an interesting moral dilemma in and of itself.

Reminds me of the bit near the end of 2001 when HAL 9000 has its cognitive circuits disconnected.

Come to think of it, if one Thought-Eater becomes (regains?) consciousness by obtaining a ring of sustenance or the like, surely it will want to acquire more of the items to free others of its kind from mindless hunger?

09-15-2009, 11:03 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Reminds me of the bit near the end of 2001 when HAL 9000 has its cognitive circuits disconnected.

Come to think of it, if one Thought-Eater becomes (regains?) consciousness by obtaining a ring of sustenance or the like, surely it will want to acquire more of the items to free others of its kind from mindless hunger?

He would need some kind of minions capable of moving between the Prime and Ethereal Planes to transport the rings for him. But it could certainly make for an interesting set of adventures - the PCs go to visit some wizard and find him starved to death, intelligence devoured (though they wouldn't know that). There are obvious signs of intrusion, but nothing obvious is missing. Similar scenes are appearing across the world, and even the most paranoid wizards are falling victim. Can the PCs stop the *Rise of the Thought-Eaters*?

09-16-2009, 01:07 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Titan

Titans are a funny one. They're so unbelievably powerful that you have to wonder if it's worth even bothering to stat them up; not only do you have a 20th level priest or mage, you have a 20th level priest or mage who can deal 7d6 + 14 hp of damage per hit with two attacks a round, has 20 HD, can cast dozens of spells at will, can become ethereal, and isn't harmed by nonmagical weapons. The authors may as well have simply said, "Titans aren't gods exactly, but they're too powerful for adventurers" and just left it at that. Although I suppose they still wanted to keep the theoretical possibility of killing one open. Something to aim for after you've slain the Tarrasque.

Anyway, you probably know the deal with Titans. Big bastards who live on Olympus, who have a basically Ancient Greek cultural background, and who have the passionate and fiery nature that suggests. They like dancing, fighting, debating, singing, drinking wine and (one guesses) shagging goats with abandon. Giant 25' goats, of course. They aren't statted up though.

The entry is intriguing, because it feels only half complete. For instance, what are we to make of this sentence: "On Olympus, titans have developed a culture *similar to what they found there*."? It implies that Titans came from somewhere else to Olympus and decided to stay, but there's no other hint in the entry as to why.

Similarly, this little fragment: "What makes them immortal is not known. *Perhaps it is their enchanted existence in the halls of Olympus*." Are we to assume then that anybody who reaches Olympus and sets up stall there becomes immortal?

Anyway, the most interesting idea associated with Titans is, I suppose, the concept of the Titan who believe he is a God and is worshiped as such by mortal followers... but is then brought low by his hubris in some way. (The entry uses the example of an upstart Titan who gets chained to the bottom of the ocean for 100 years by Odin.) It would be quite an interesting plot hook to have the adventurers stumble across a down on his luck Titan who is after revenge against the God who wronged him. Maybe not at the bottom of the ocean, though.

09-16-2009, 10:42 AM

Kakita Kojiro

You know, if you have a Titan from Olympus being chained to the bottom of the sea by *Odin*... either you're failing your Classics class, or you're playing D&D.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Maybe it's a lover of poetry, music and plays, protecting a particularly controversial troupe of actors and giving rise to stories of a "phantom of opera".

Makes me think of a genius Thought-Eater who is a connoisseur. Perhaps he protects that troupe of actors because it's more enjoyable eating the Int of the audience while they're watching the play.

09-17-2009, 03:19 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
isn't harmed by nonmagical weapons.

I love this. Because if you're trying to hit a Titan with a nonmagical weapon, then you're already doing something wrong. Is the text really necessary? Anyone who thinks that they have a chance of killing a titan should have a magical weapon already. Several, most likely.

It also makes me wonder if titans are immune to all nonmagical damage. Is a titan immune to falling damage? Do they ignore an avalanche? If so, then titans pasttimes might be very different than humans ones. If not, then adventurers could set up traps to trigger avalanches or the like when they decide to finally fight the titan. That would make a good set piece.

09-17-2009, 03:56 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Oh yeah, titans. They're possibly the hardest monster in the whole MM. (Also, why are they all CG, anyway? In the Greek mythology, many titans were pretty awful.)

I like the bit of "mini-mythology", with the listed titans and their strange and powerful powers; has anyone involved those in their game? You could have distant, impersonal deities, and then a bunch of titans living on a huge mountain at the center of the world as the managers of the world...

09-17-2009, 04:10 AM

Dormammu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**
Oh yeah, titans. They're possibly the hardest monster in the whole MM. (Also, why are they all CG, anyway? In the Greek mythology, many titans were pretty awful.)

Titans in D&D don't bear any resemblance to Greek Titans at all, really. Actually 4E's primordial/elemental/chaos version of Titans are probably closer to Greek ones.

09-17-2009, 06:17 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**
It also makes me wonder if titans are immune to all nonmagical damage. Is a titan immune to falling damage? Do they ignore an avalanche? If so, then titans pasttimes might be very different than humans ones. If not, then adventurers could set up traps to trigger avalanches or the like when they decide to finally fight the titan. That would make a good set piece.

That's how I've always run AD&D creatures that need magic weapons to hurt. Mundane damage simply doesn't affect them - it either passes through harmlessly, bounces off, or the wounds instantly vanish. A titan hit by an

avalanche may be trapped beneath it, but won't be killed. Unless it's a *magic* avalanche, of course.

That said, those magic-to-hit monsters that are living creatures still have biological weaknesses, so can be suffocated, starved, poisoned et cetera. There's a bit at the start of one of the AD&D Conan adventures where the party (all 9th+ level fighters and fighter/thieves) meet a gargoyle. They don't have any magic arms, and the adventure specifically says they can't hurt it by normal means, but can hurt it by using the unarmed combat rules. Imagine Red Sonja strangling a gargoyle!

Back in the 1st edition DMG there was a special rule that particularly tough (high HD) monsters could hit creatures immune to non magical weapons up to a certain plus. If I remember correctly it worked out something like ogres could hit +1 magic-to-hit monsters, giants +2 or +3, titans +4. That's a bit contradictory to the magic-to-hit renders you completely immune to brute force theory, but I rationalized it as such creatures could hit supernatural creatures because their strength (Hit Dice) was itself partially magical, not just because they were strong.

09-17-2009, 09:59 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Dormammu**

Titans in D&D don't bear any resemblance to Greek Titans at all, really. Actually 4E's primordial/elemental/chaos version of Titans are probably closer to Greek ones.

There were 'proper' titans living on Carceri, detailed in I think *Planes of Conflict*.

09-17-2009, 11:03 PM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Makes me think of a genius Thought-Eater who is a connoisseur. Perhaps he protects that troupe of actors because it's more enjoyable eating the Int of the audience while they're watching the play.

Interesting twist on the whole 'television makes you stupid' trope. ;)

(Actually, I don't see why coaxial cable couldn't also be a psychic conduit allowing the Thought-Eaters to drain intelligence points remotely.)

I never found much use for C/G semi-deities. They seem a bit like the ultimate tool for a DM to reign in an out of control party before he has to resort to actual divine smiting.

09-18-2009, 01:51 PM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

It also makes me wonder if titans are immune to all nonmagical damage. Is a titan immune to falling damage? Do they ignore an avalanche?

I don't recall specifically what the 1st and 2nd edition rules are, but we house-ruled it that each "plus" of non-magical damage resistance a creature had would absorb 2d6 of non-magical environment damage per attack. For example, since a Marilith can only be damaged by +2 weapons or better, she could fall 40 feet without damage. (This immunity didn't cover drowning or asphyxiation damage.) This gave a nice supernaturally tough, mythic feel to damage-resistant creatures, while still making them susceptible to massive amounts of mundane damage (i.e. crushed by an avalanche).

To keep this post topical, I once participated in a campaign where titans (of various diverse alignments) were the earthly avatars of the gods. This lent the pantheon a "gods walk among us," pre-Christian vibe -- you could physically talk (or even, in theory, kill) the worldly representative of your god -- and at the same time made the gods themselves more worthy of awe. If the nearly-indestructible titans were only the petty avatars of the gods, how much more powerful are THEY?

09-21-2009, 01:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **HaplessVictim**

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Well I liked them being immune to mundane impact damage, it gave them a nice supernatural quality in the "Nothing but a weapon blessed by the Craft can harm the demon that torments us" vein.

09-21-2009, 01:47 AM

Naxuul

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Dormammu**

Titans in D&D don't bear any resemblance to Greek Titans at all, really. Actually 4E's primordial/elemental/chaos version of Titans are probably closer to Greek ones.

I don't see how. All the titans were beautiful and powerful, be they Zeus, Tethys, Cronus, Oceanos, Prometheus etc. 'Weird monstrous elemental thingies' would be more like the Cyclops, Hetachonchire, Typhon, Echidna and other weirder things to come out of Gaia's earthen womb.

4E Primordials are more like Uranus and Gaia than the proper titans.

-Naxuul

09-21-2009, 08:56 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Naxuul**

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4E Primordials are more like Uranus and Gaia than the proper titans.

-Naxuul

Hur hur, you said Uranus.

09-21-2009, 06:02 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Naxuul**

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4E Primordials are more like Uranus and Gaia than the proper titans.

-Naxuul

I always saw the Titans as big, nasty, primordial sort of things the things before the current, rather fetching but capricious, crop of gods and goddesses.

Going on the basis of my brief fascination with Greek mythology when aged 8, and wikipedia, I think the Titans were sort of elemental, but fundamental, primal stuff rather than the glossy, shiny, weirdos that inhabit the world of later D&D editions. (Time, memory, natural law?)

Anyway, quests to dig up, awaken or free one of these leftovers of a bygone era are always fun, as not only are you going against the rather strong prohibitions of the current gods, but, unlike the current gods, who may smite you, make your life a living hell or make love to you shaped as a bull, these Titans are really, really strange and almost completely incomprehensible.

And usually want to rain chaos down on the world rather than answer your modest questions about the location of The Tomb of Arcos....

09-22-2009, 03:26 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

unlike the current gods, who may smite you, make your life a living hell or make love to you shaped as a bull, these Titans are really, really strange and almost completely incomprehensible.

For a long time, I have wanted to play a cleric of Cronus, god/Titan of Time, and baby-eating. As deity of time, Cronus foresaw his own downfall by his son, so he sent one of his high priests forward into the future to try to

free Cronus from his future imprisonment. So now the former high priest has reduced clerical powers (Cronus can grant small power while imprisoned... putting the cleric at the same power level as the other PCs) and is fighting the other gods to free Cronus from whatever extradimensional prison he's in.

Time would be a fun domain, but I'm not sure what spells you'd get for baby-eating. (At least one kobold god should share the domain, though.)

It's dodgy mythology at best, but D&D is all about dodgy myths and folklore in service of a good game.

09-22-2009, 05:00 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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...and after unsuccessfully scouring all the planes for his god's extradimensional prison the high priest discovers the kobold diety **is** Cronus, trapped in that form for eons inconceivable to a mere mortal.

Mark my words, Kobolds, will be the new Titans! :)

09-22-2009, 06:37 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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Time would be a fun domain, but I'm not sure what spells you'd get for baby-eating. (At least one kobold god should share the domain, though.)

For a spin on the concept, perhaps Cronus is doing the *good* thing.

The new clergy have a great secret, revealed only the highest of priests. A secret terrifying enough to age them prematurely, and make them shiver in their sanctuaries. A secret they are *compelled* to protect by the beings they worship.

For the children of Cronus and Rhea were stillborn. The image they project, of strong and lusty beings with great earthy appetites and all-too-human failings, is just a facade. Divine mummery, illusion. For Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, and all their siblings, buried behind layers of deceit, are atropals. Vile undead abominations, Gaia's abortions. And Aphrodite, born from the member Cronus severed from his father, is something even fouler.

The stomach of the ruler of the golden age is the only vessel powerful enough to contain them. Eating the babies is the only solution.

09-23-2009, 12:44 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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The stomach of the ruler of the golden age is the only vessel powerful enough to contain them. Eating the babies is the only solution.

Curious. I was thinking of about making up a myth justifying Cronus's baby-eating to, although with a rather different slant...

In the beginning, everything that existed was alive and conscious. Every rock, stream and breeze had a living, thinking spirit. When they "died" they merely pooled back with the elemental forces and were reborn in new, fresh forms. Some of these nature spirits were sapient - nymphs and satyrs, elves and brownies - creatures that could dream and talk and imagine, and the greatest of these were the Titans, ruled by the mighty Cronus.

Cronus looked into the future and saw that his yet to be born children, the gods, would destroy the natural balance of the world. The gods would invent a new kind of being, a *mortal* whose spirit and material existence were separate. When such a being died its spirit could be carried off by a god out into the Astral Wastes to be trapped in a dreamlike heaven or hell, were they would become the playthings of the gods, instead of returning to the world and rebirth like nature intended. The body left behind would be merely lifeless ashes and clay, and after eons the drain of spiritual essence from the world would leave it a dull and wonder-less place.

Obviously, Cronus could not countenance such a thing, so he followed the best path that he could foresee. Imprisoning the gods in his stomach kept them out of mischief for many millenia, and he sent his favoured priests into the far future so that he would return to life in that distant time, ages after he was grossly and treacherously slain by his last-born son Zeus.

09-23-2009, 02:48 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

...and after unsuccessfully scouring all the planes for his god's extradimensional prison the high priest discovers the kobold diety **is** Cronus, trapped in that form for eons inconceivable to a mere mortal.

Mark my words, Kobolds, will be the new Titans! :)

Kobolds as worshippers of imprisoned Titans is pretty neat. They don't eat your baby just because it's delicious (though it is), but in worship of their imprisoned titan master.

As a bonus, kobolds are inherently opposed to any D&D party with a cleric or paladin in them. And have their own weird heresies to espouse as they fight.

09-23-2009, 04:40 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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I learned a new word today.

I wonder if the kobolds have developed a version of the terducken. A dwarf baby stuffed with an elf baby stuffed with a gnome baby stuffed with a halfling baby, and roasted to a crispy goodness. Badness? It's all relative.

09-23-2009, 05:43 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I learned a new word today.

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These days, at least, halflings are bigger than gnomes. (Though the 3.x PHB seemed to show gnomes as bigger. Never noticed that.) Who was bigger in previous editions?

Somewhere in one of Paizo's adventure paths they had a Terducken made out of stupid D&D monsters (tojanida, I think, and maybe axebeak?). Or maybe our GM made that up, I have no idea.

09-23-2009, 05:53 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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What is the world coming to these days? Gnomes shorter than halflings.... ;)

They're about the same size on average (by the 2nd edition PHB), but halflings have a larger range:

Gnomes: 39-44"

Halflings: 34-48"

The Monstrous Manual tends to put gnomes as taller, depending on subrace.

09-23-2009, 06:23 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

These days, at least, halflings are bigger than gnomes. (Though the 3.x PHB seemed to show gnomes as bigger. Never noticed that.) Who was bigger in previous editions?

Forest gnomes might fit in a teapot :)

Ignoring odd subraces, gnomes tend to win out by a hair. Or none at all, for the svirfneblin. If you want to Appeal to the Authority of Gygax (1E DMG p. 102):

Male gnome 42 +/- 1d3 in.

Female gnome 39 +/- 1d3 in.

Male halfling 36 -1d3 or +1d6 in.

Female halfling 33 +/- 1d3 in.

And a 20–25 lb difference.

09-23-2009, 07:10 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

RPG.net's gone terducken crazy today.

09-23-2009, 07:18 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

It's not called a terkey, people. **Turducken**. ;)

09-27-2009, 06:39 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

It's not called a terkey, people. **Turducken**. ;)

This is D&D, it could very well be a "Terkey". I'm thinking some horrible magical hybrid of a Giant Termite and a large gamebird.

09-28-2009, 11:14 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Toad, Giant

I'm having a weird sense of deja vu here; didn't we already talk about Giant Toads and how they're the bane of halfling and gnome characters everywhere? Perhaps I'm imagining it, and don't really have the time or energy to trawl through the previous threads... Maybe somebody else remembers.

Anyway. Toads. Big ones. Giant, if you will. Different to Giant Frogs somehow - I was never clear on the difference between a toad and a frog. They live in damp areas, often underground, always close to a water source, and are ambush predators who like to lie in wait for their prey.

Sometimes they make their homes in sewers ("giant monstrosities which have grown fat on vermin, house pets, and, occasionally, civil engineers"), which strikes me as a fun encounter.

Fire Toad

These large red amphibians prefer dry areas. Their main distinction is that they can breathe small fire balls. The Fire Toad is, to me, the ne plus ultra of D&D monster design. You can almost picture a few designers sitting around in the office late on a Friday afternoon, unable to leave until they've come up with their monster quota for the week, the first beer of the night so close they can almost taste it... When one of them suddenly blurts out, "Let's just have a giant toad that can breathe fire and be done with it!" And they all head off down the pub.

Ice Toad

These anti-Fire Toads make their home in Arctic regions and can radiate cold. Bizarrely, they have average intelligence and have their own language - an even rarer character sheet feature than Elven Cat?

One can easily envisage an Ice Toad civilisation somewhere up there in the frozen north, perhaps with a Quaggoth slave caste and lots of Remorhaz to ride around on.

Poisonous Toad

Basically the same as a Giant Toad, except able to secrete poison which somehow works through a bite attack. (Aren't poisonous frogs and toads always more defensive, i.e. you get poisoned if you bite it, rather than vice versa?) Anyway, there's some unintended humour in the fact that the poison is described as "weak" (you get a +2 bonus to the saving throw) even though a failed save results in death within 24 hours.

09-29-2009, 04:09 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

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Anyway. Toads. Big ones. Giant, if you will. Different to Giant Frogs somehow - I was never clear on the difference between a toad and a frog.

I think you answered your own question here: You're confusing giant toads with giant frogs. Giant frogs (covered way back in the Fs) can drag people in with their sticky tongues, and they can do this more effectively if the frog is bigger than the target. So small sized characters like gnomes are screwed over yet again by D&D.

09-29-2009, 09:25 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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Aha. That would make sense.

Interesting that there are separate giant frog and toad entries. You would think they could be lumped together...

09-29-2009, 09:43 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Aha. That would make sense.

Interesting that there are separate giant frog and toad entries. You would think they could be lumped together...

Well, there are separate entries for Frog and Toad, and each gets their own "Giant" variety, with its own stats. Why you need different stats for Frogs and Toads, I don't know. (I realize that they are different, but they're not different enough for me to care or for me to need different stats for each variety.)

09-29-2009, 10:06 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Well, there are separate entries for Frog and Toad, and each gets their own "Giant" variety, with its own stats. Why you need different stats for Frogs and Toads, I don't know. (I realize that they are different, but they're not different enough for me to care or for me to need different stats for each variety.)

"Toad" is generally applied to frogs who have adapted to terrestrial environments. This has happened a lot of times, in the frog (anuran) family tree. Frogs and toads aren't distinct family groups. They're like one big extended family with random cousins here and there who listen to death metal.

09-29-2009, 02:44 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Don't forget that you can make warty, smelly toad-leather armor! It says so right there in the entry!

Hmmm... magical toad-leather armor that makes you inpalatable to biting things?

09-29-2009, 11:54 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

There are also more magical toads than frogs--see the fire and ice toads. The best giant frogs ever get is "killer".

It always confused me that ice toads were intelligent back when I was a young'un. Of course, they don't have thumbs, so how well they can put that intelligence to use is another question, but I do much like the idea of the ice toads as bizarre Northern raiders, sweeping into small villages in the dead of night, leaving behind nothing but blood on the snow.

09-30-2009, 01:19 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Toad, Giant

I'm having a weird sense of deja vu here; didn't we already talk about Giant Toads and how they're the bane of halfling and gnome characters everywhere? Perhaps I'm imagining it, and don't really have the time or energy to trawl through the previous threads... Maybe somebody else remembers.

As Mr Teapot has already said, that was our Giant Frog discussion.

Now regarding AD&D's giant Batrachians, it seems wrong somehow that they aren't tough enough to take on most giant insects. The largest Giant Frog has the same 3 hit dice as a Giant Bluebottle. Of course, it's noticable that AD&D's giant arthropods are, well, gianter (for want of a better word) than its giant vertebrates. Still, I'd like Giant Frogs and Toads to be more the size of water buffaloes and elephants, so they can gulp down fire beetles and giant flies.

The fact that this would make them much nastier foes for PCs to face is, of course, entirely circumstantial.

Actually, I've long toyed with the idea of a fantasy roleplaying scenario or campaign where all the animals are GIANT - frogs the size of houses, hundred foot-long monitor lizards, et cetera. Nothing ever came from it, although there are a number of published scenarios which play with the idea through the "shrinking the PCs to bug size" ploy.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Sometimes they make their homes in sewers ("giant monstrosities which have grown fat on vermin, house pets, and, occasionally, civil engineers"), which strikes me as a fun encounter.

That was my thinking to. It'd have to be a very low level AD&D party for a giant toad to be a "monstrosity" of course ... unless you exchange it for a Froghemoth.:D

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Fire Toad

Have you seen the Amicus film ***At the Earth's Core***? There's a creature in it that's the spitting image of a Fire Toad, complete with flamethrower. I've long wondered whether whoever was responsible for it had been reading the Monster Manual, since I don't think any such creature appears in any of the Edgar Rice Burroughs novels it is based on. You can see a video of it from [this review](#) of the film.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Ice Toad

One can easily envisage an Ice Toad civilisation somewhere up there in the frozen north, perhaps with a Quaggoth slave caste and lots of Remorhaz to ride around on.

I find your suggestion intriguing. They could be like Lovecraft's Moonbeasts, a monstrous race as alien in their thinking as they are cruel, that disdains fine crafts as work fit only for slaves, valuing only strength, faith and will.

09-30-2009, 02:48 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Still, I'd like Giant Frogs and Toads to be more the size of water buffaloes and elephants, so they can gulp down fire beetles and giant flies.

The Giant Toads are kinda disappointing in the giant category (as are the frogs, and many other "giant" creatures). When I hear "giant" I want something bigger than an elephant, not man sized or smaller.

At the very least, I want the giant toads big enough that some PC race could ride them into battle. Maybe gnomes, or lizardmen.

09-30-2009, 06:44 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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At the very least, I want the giant toads big enough that some PC race could ride them into battle. Maybe gnomes, or lizardmen.

Absolutely! So when the captain of the Gnomish Batrachian Hussars tells his troops to hop to it, he wants them to **Hop To It!** ;)

09-30-2009, 10:11 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Absolutely! So when the captain of the Gnomish Batrachian Hussars tells his troops to hop to it, he wants them to **Hop To It!** ;)

Gnomes live a long, long time. Dozens of generations of humans and halflings can be born, blossom, and have their own babies before a gnome is laid to rest in a secret passage under the floor of the family burrow. Their lifespans are almost (but not quite) as long as the elves.

But unlike the elves, they don't spend their lives in a perpetual spring. Elves age gracefully, almost imperceptibly. An elder in her second millennium may still be as spry as a youth of a hundred summers. Not so, gnomes. While they are not born with permanent grooves carved around their eyes, this does not last. Their youth and vitality lasts only as long as a human. But unlike humans, who putter and then sputter and go out, gnomes linger. For a century, two, five, even seven. Gnomes spend most of their lives wizened and frail.

Which makes the toad riders an especially sad case. See, all that bouncing around just isn't good. Babies can die when shaken like a rattle. It's the brain, bruising itself against the cranium. Pugilists lose their memory, start to tremble and shake. The jabs and concussions cause what is sometimes known as the boxer's disease.

So too with the toad riders. Powerful legs like springs release, and then the body comes crashing down. The rider is treated to a rough trip. Up and down, over and over. The years of practice, of training, add up. That continuous violent shaking causes brain damage.

In every gnome community, there is a creche. A retirement home as it were, for the riders whose mastery of simple tasks like going to the bathroom or feeding themselves has slipped. Heroes, yes. The honored veterans. But also a hidden shame. Most gnomes are resigned to spending the majority of their lives physically decrepit, but at least they keep their minds. They grow in wisdom and knowledge, become scholars and sages and magi and analysts.

The toad riders linger on, through the long, long latter years of gnomehood. But they are like children again. Wispy hair with faces like prunes, fragile and weak and stooped. Cared for by their siblings and the few youths.

09-30-2009, 06:51 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Which makes the toad riders an especially sad case. See, all that bouncing around just isn't good. Babies can die when shaken like a rattle. It's the brain, bruising itself against the cranium. Pugilists lose their memory, start to tremble and shake. The jabs and concussions cause what is sometimes known as the boxer's disease.

So too with the toad riders. Powerful legs like springs release, and then the body comes crashing down. The rider is treated to a rough trip. Up and down, over and over. The years of practice, of training, add up. That continuous violent shaking causes brain damage.

A couple of points of disagreement to alleviate this tragic tale.

Firstly, while it's true that some veterans of the Gnomish Batrachian Hussars are in a sad mental case from decades of riding their hopping steeds, it's the **frog** riders, not the toad riders who suffer so. Giant Toads don't leap, but walk and run, their ride is as smooth as a camel.

Secondly, sparing heroes from the debilitating effects of injury is one of the reasons the kind Gods gave us healing magic. Sadly, gnomes are not powerful in the clerical arts so they often must seek the help of human priests to give their honoured veterans back the full use of their wits. Finding such a healer in a human city and escorting them back to Burrowtown is a common mission for budding gnome adventurers, who often seek the assistance of non-gnome partners.

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Unfortunately, while the *cure* spells are good for wounds and other injuries that would heal in days or weeks*, *regenerate* is needed for permanent injuries like brain damage. And priests who can and will cast the high valence spell are rare and dear. Maybe one gnome a generation might get lucky.

* Or months, or years; the most powerful and hardy adventures seem to spend ridiculous amounts of time as bedridden invalids.

10-01-2009, 08:51 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I always forget about the Giant Frogs, but Giant Toads seem to stick in my memory better. I'm not sure why, but I suspect it has to do with that picture.

On Ice Toads, perhaps they're the remnants of some barbarian tribe cursed to Toad-dom long ago. Regardless, intelligent toads do strike me as rather pulp - I could imagine John Carter fighting giant, intelligent toads.

And on a completely unrelated note, I recently saw a picture of the Nymph from the Monstrous Manual, but nude. It was otherwise the exact same picture. See [here](#). What's up with two of the same picture, one clothed and one not?

10-01-2009, 04:02 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

And on a completely unrelated note, I recently saw a picture of the Nymph from the Monstrous Manual, but nude. It was otherwise the exact same picture. See [here](#). What's up with two of the same picture, one clothed and one not?

The naked nymph is the original artwork. When DiTerlizzi submitted it, the TSR people overseeing the MM project worried that it was too explicit and unsuitable for a game manual that was going to be read by kids, too. So they had him redo the pic, adding a filmy shirt for the nymph. ("But... but she's a nymph! Going around naked and beautiful *is what they do!*")

(TDT explained this on his old website somewhere, years ago.)

10-01-2009, 08:27 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Unfortunately, while the *cure* spells are good for wounds and other injuries that would heal in days or weeks*, *regenerate* is needed for permanent injuries like brain damage. And priests who can and will cast the high valence spell are rare and dear. Maybe one gnome a generation might get lucky.

* Or months, or years; the most powerful and hardy adventures seem to spend ridiculous amounts of time as bedridden invalids.

I was careful to avoid stating what kind of clerical healing would be necessary, but in this case what particular spell is necessary is a matter of interpretation. Since the cure wounds spells are not given an expiry time limit on how old the injuries they can heal are, I could argue that they could heal brain injuries of this kind. If it was in a game I ran I'd probably rule that such spells would only work if cast soon after the excessive hopping, since if they left it too long then the relevant brain cells die (since I interpret cure wounds spells as not effecting dead or missing tissue), but that a *heal* spell would be enough to cause a complete recovery.

Of course, if they're heroes then they probably would have received frequent cure wounds spells from getting healed after each battle, which could have prevented any cumulative brain damage building up in the first place.

But regardless, even if a high-enough level cleric is unavailable, that just means the adventure becomes one of acquiring an appropriate magical item (*staff of healing*, *scroll of regenerate* or whatever) and take it to Gnometown, no doubt dealing with thieves and monster-infested wildernesses on the way.

10-02-2009, 12:11 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I was careful to avoid stating what kind of clerical healing would be necessary, but in this case what particular spell is necessary is a matter of interpretation. Since the cure wounds spells are not given an expiry time limit on how old the injuries they can heal are, I could argue that they could heal brain injuries of this kind. If it was in a game I ran I'd probably rule that such spells would only work if cast soon after the excessive hopping, since if they left it to long then the relevant brain cells die (since I interpret cure wounds spells as not effecting dead or missing tissue), but that a *heal* spell would be enough to cause a complete recovery.

That's more than an variant interpretation. That's a house rule. :)

10-02-2009, 07:22 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That's more than an variant interpretation. That's a house rule. :)

BURN THE WITCH!

10-02-2009, 10:02 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Treant

It doesn't take a literary historian to work out the inspiration for this creature - it's an Ent with the serial numbers filed off. Picture Treebeard, but with Hit Dice. The stat block is a source of slight amusement and wonder, though. For example, the fact that the Treant's diet is "Photosynthesis" (not light and water, as with other plant entries), or that its Organisation is "Grove".

Not a huge amount to say about Treants. They're one of those creatures scattered through the MM who seem to write themselves. Wise forest shepherds to consult or ask for aid, or mysterious guardians you shouldn't cross. Take your pick.

I do think there is room for Treants as vengeful and capricious nature spirits, in a more True Neutral or perhaps Chaotic Neutral vein. (Old Man Willow rather than Treebeard.) Forest haunts who slay bipedal intruders on dark and windy nights. Picture the scene: You're in a clearing, camped around a fire. The wind is high, rain is on the way. Hearing a noise, you glance behind you. No, nothing has changed - there's just a wall of trees, their canopy gently swaying and rustling. You go back to tending your fire. Wait, that was definitely a noise! You turn around again. Is it just your imagination, or are the trees suddenly closer? Then there's a sudden gust of wind and rain, and the fire goes out....

10-02-2009, 10:43 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

It doesn't take a literary historian to work out the inspiration for this creature - it's an Ent with the serial numbers filed off. Picture Treebeard, but with Hit Dice.

For some reason, that conjures up an image of a gangster rapper treant. Two huge dice with gemstone pips dangle from the heavy gold chain around its neck. When gang warfare flares between the oaks and the maples, it swings the chain around its head as a weapon and busts mad rhymes about the birches. All while trying to hold up its baggy moss-pants with its other hand.

10-02-2009, 10:46 AM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Treants are so obviously Treebeard, it's almost a waste. Spooky forests are much cooler - look at the chase scene at the start of *Snow White*. Tolkien had deep-dark-woods all over the place, but Treebeard was so harmless once he decided to be friendly that he defangs the whole concept of the forest as the place where you will get lost, die, and be chased by witch-wolves or some such.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That's more than an variant interpretation. That's a house rule. :)

Permanent brain damage would count as ability score damage, no? Unfortunately I'm only familiar with 3.x rules on the topic so I'm not sure how you'd treat this under 2e.

10-02-2009, 10:46 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One thing I've always wondered about is the relationship between Treants and Dryads. They live in the same ecosystem and fulfill a similar niche.

Are they related? In competition?

10-02-2009, 10:58 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

For spooky forests, Tolkien's huorns might be a better model. Semi-sapient embodiments of the rage and hurt of the forest. The fully aware treants might be too few to keep them in check. In some of the darkest forests, the huorns might have turned on the treants, and slain them all leaving their bodies to rot.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Asmodai**

One thing I've always wondered about is the relationship between Treants and Dryads. They live in the same ecosystem and fulfill a similar niche.

Are they related? In competition?

Dryads are the fruiting bodies of a symbiotic fungus that encrusts the treants, of course.

10-02-2009, 10:46 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

That's more than an variant interpretation. That's a house rule. :)

Nope, there's nothing in the description that says a *cure X wound* spell can't completely heal any sort of kinetic injury (even ones that would normally be crippling) regardless of long ago it took place, provided the injury didn't result in the physical loss of the organ in question (e.g. *cure serious wounds* won't grow back a hand, for that you need *regeneration*), although since it can still restore the subject to full hit points it can presumably completely cure what remains (e.g. said hand-less character could have a perfectly healed stump). There's no reason to assume it doesn't cure microscopic wounds to the brain caused by excessive giant frog-riding as well, meaning it could be a valid interpretation within the rules in my not-so-humble opinion.
:cool:

10-02-2009, 10:52 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

Permanent brain damage would count as ability score damage, no? Unfortunately I'm only familiar with 3.x rules on the topic so I'm not sure how you'd treat this under 2e.

Well AD&D doesn't really set down general rules on long-term or crippling injury, it just has a lot of special cases (e.g. spell X might say it withers one of the target's limbs and it needs a *regeneration* spell to recover, adventure Y might have a trap that breaks someone's leg and says it can be instantly set by a *cure serious wounds*.)

This leaves a lot to the rules interpretation (our outright whims) of each DM and group of players, and much argument was had by all.

10-02-2009, 11:06 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Treant

It doesn't take a literary historian to work out the inspiration for this creature - it's an Ent with the serial numbers filed off. Picture Treebeard, but with Hit Dice. The stat block is a source of slight amusement and wonder, though. For example, the fact that the Treant's diet is "Photosynthesis" (not light and water, as with other plant entries), or that its Organisation is "Grove".

I prefer to think of them as Ents with a few serial numbers add, namely a "T", an "R" and an "A":o

The few Tr(e)a(nts) I've seen in AD&D adventures have always been rather clichéd chaotic good tree-shepherd/elderly-hippy types, surely there's more that can be done with them.

Maybe have them be the ruling council of a Kingdom of the Plants, which appears a monstrous and alien place to outsiders. Or a Treant as an Ambassador of the Forest, accompanied by an entourage of druids and Sylvan creatures they march into neighbouring kingdoms to demand punishment for defilers of nature (by having them polymorphed into oak trees and sold as planks), threatening a War of the Trees if their idea of justice is not satisfied.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Dryads are the fruiting bodies of a symbiotic fungus that encrusts the treants, of course.

I prefer dryads as autonomous flowers, with handsome adventures playing the role of pollinators.

10-03-2009, 01:17 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Nope, there's nothing in the description that says a *cure X wound* spell can't completely heal any sort of kinetic injury (even ones that would normally be crippling) regardless of long ago it took place, provided the injury didn't result in the physical loss of the organ in question (e.g. *cure serious wound* won't grow back a hand, for that you need *regeneration*), although since it can still restore the subject to full hit points it can presumably completely cure what remains (e.g. said hand-less character could have a perfectly healed stump). There's no reason to assume it doesn't cure microscopic wounds to the brain caused by excessive giant frog-riding as well, meaning it could be a valid interpretation within the rules in my not-so-humble opinion.

:cool:

The *cure light wound* spell in the 2E *PH* "causes 1d8 points of wound or other injury damage to the creature's body to be healed", and that's all. The other *cure* spells have almost identical wording. They restore that abstract pacing mechanic called "hit points". They revitalize, refresh, restore flagging confidence and morale, and yes, cure a few scratches and possibly more serious cuts or lacerations. The same things that would fixed by time and bed rest. There's really no tradition of lumping in anything else. Yes, there might be the occasional module that uses one of the *cure* spells to heal a specific injury. But there are literally hundreds of modules, by dozens and dozens of authors. Some with a better grasp of the rules than others. Coming up with an effect that's not supported by the existing rules (a trap that breaks a limb doesn't fit well in a game that uses an abstract method for tracking injury) and picking a random level-appropriate spell (one the PCs can cast) to magically solve the problem is lazy design. There isn't any mention of that sort of thing in any books that aren't relying on a device to move along the plot. No Sage Advice or rulebooks suggest that the *cure* spells heal anything other than hit points caused by injuries.

It's really a toss-up between *heal* and *regenerate*. While it's not on the specific list of effects that are cured by *heal*, the spell at least has a tendency to become a dumping ground for random "what heals this?" problems. *Regenerate* on the other hand specifically covers permanent injuries, though it focuses on the gross bodily type. Both are stretches, but reasonable and within the spirit of the rules. Or if the DM is less willing to bend the rules, *wish*.

Plus, you mentioned "microscopic". Isn't trying to apply real-world physics to D&D's game mechanics an automatic "I lose" button? :)

10-03-2009, 01:27 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I prefer dryads as autonomous flowers, with handsome adventures playing the role of pollinators.

Pollinators? Like bees? That raises several questions. Why males? Why sex? How does the pollen get passed on, and where does it come from?

Dryads always seem to be attracted to healthy, virile males. Presumably at the peak of their sexual activity. Specifically, attractive males who are more likely to have a large number of sexual partners. Why is this beneficial?

Wait.

The pollen that carries the male gametes that allow them to reproduce manifests as a sexually transmitted disease in humanoids. Of course, they want males who have had numerous partners. This increases the chances that the male is infected.

Unlike real women, Dryads *want* to catch the clap.

10-03-2009, 08:31 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Nothing about their lame animation ability? It is obviously an homage to hunorns but the actual ability is fairly useless (30 feet?).

10-03-2009, 08:59 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

Permanent brain damage would count as ability score damage, no? Unfortunately I'm only familiar with 3.x rules on the topic so I'm not sure how you'd treat this under 2e.

In 3.x it certainly wouldn't be covered by Cure spells, as ability damage requires Restoration or similar spells that specify removing ability damage. Cure spells only remove HP damage, which is entirely separate.

Re: treants. The manual suggests that they don't deal with any creatures that live less than 500 years. I suppose that's why elves live all nice and happy in the woods, but humans don't: elves live long enough that the trees respect them. Humans, not so much.

10-04-2009, 06:15 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The *cure light wound* spell in the 2E *PH* "causes 1d8 points of wound or other injury damage to the creature's body to be healed", and that's all. The other *cure* spells have almost identical wording.

SNIP

It's really a toss-up between *heal* and *regenerate*. While it's not on the specific list of effects that are cured by *heal*, the spell at least has a tendency to become a dumping ground for random "what heals this?" problems. *Regenerate* on the other hand specifically covers permanent injuries, though it focuses on the gross bodily type. Both are stretches, but reasonable and within the spirit of the rules. Or if the DM is less willing to bend the rules, *wish*.

Plus, you mentioned "microscopic". Isn't trying to apply real-world physics to D&D's game mechanics an automatic "I lose" button? :)

Although personally I'd rule you'd need a heal, it all depends on how you interpret that "other injury damage", doesn't it. There's nothing to prevent a liberal interpretation vis-à-vis cure wounds ability to prevent lingering injuries.

Is brain damage caused by sitting on a giant frog hopping up and down and different than that caused by falling repeatedly down shallow pits, or being punched repeatedly in the face? If multiple *cure light wounds spells* prevent the gnomes heroes getting brain damage from entering The Dungeon of Trip-Holes and Pugilistic Goblins by curing the resulting "hit points", where's the logic in it not preventing (or even curing) Repetitive Batrachian Riding Syndrome?
:o

10-04-2009, 06:26 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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Unlike real women, Dryads *want* to catch the clap.

That's more or less the idea. The dryad have stamina and pistils in a discrete portion of their anatomy that mimics a female human's, so it requires a male humanoid's specialized organ to properly access them and get "infected". After a love-struck weekend the dryad lets the man wander away, hopefully to encounter another "woodwife" and pass on the nymph's genetic material.

For a more sinister spin on it. Maybe dryad pollen is not only similar to an infection, it is actually contagious to other Fey. If the dryad's lover has a later assignation with a nymph, sylph or other female Fey then they undergo a strange transformation, their hair turns to leaves, their skin becomes petal-like and they seek out the largest, oldest tree in their area and merge into it, becoming a new wood-spirit. Thus, the dryad picks particularly handsome, promiscuous men because they are the most likely to win the favours of a suitable Fey and produce more of their kind.

10-04-2009, 06:29 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Nothing about their lame animation ability? It is obviously an homage to hunorns but the actual ability is fairly useless (30 feet?).

It says 60 yards in the Monstrous Manual, which seems a usable distance, or were you referring to the tree's movement rate of 3, which admittedly is quite lousy.

Although, even if the trees have to stand practically next to the Treant, having the ability to create a pair of 12 HD monsters with two 4d6 attacks apiece is not to be sneered at.

10-04-2009, 06:56 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Is brain damage caused by sitting on a giant frog hopping up and down and different than that caused by falling repeatedly down shallow pits, or being punched repeatedly in the face?

Yes. The magic words are "hit points".

Not all damage is measured in hit points. A shaken baby can die just as easily as a baby dropped 20 feet. But one takes 2d6 hit points of damage, the other probably just makes a save to avoid dying.

A better argument is that D&D just doesn't model subtle injuries well. Concussions, post-traumatic encephalitis, sprains, broken bones, internal bleeding... any rules for those conditions have to be made up on the fly.

10-04-2009, 07:07 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

For a more sinister spin on it. Maybe dryad pollen is not only similar to an infection, it is actually contagious to other Fey. If the dryad's lover has a later assignation with a nymph, sylph or other female Fey then they undergo a strange transformation, their hair turns to leaves, their skin becomes petal-like and they seek out the largest, oldest tree in their area and merge into it, becoming a new wood-spirit. Thus, the dryad picks particularly handsome, promiscuous men because they are the most likely to win the favours of a suitable Fey and produce more of their kind.

I'd spin that slightly differently. There is a huge body of myth about faeries stealing babies, wives, husbands, lovers... why not head in that direction?

A traveling merchant has an affair with a dryad, and returns home. His wife is happy to see him, and they embrace. But over the next couple of days she starts to change. Her skin starts to tan, her hair has a green tint, she starts behaving strangely. Listening, to something far off in the woods only she can hear. Then one day she just vanishes. If her husband spots her as she darts toward the forest, he is in for a shock. She doesn't even look human anymore.

Affects mortal women, not immortal fey. If that were the case, even the rumor of being a dryad-lover would be enough to turn a man into a social pariah.

10-05-2009, 07:14 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I'd spin that slightly differently. There is a huge body of myth about faeries stealing babies, wives, husbands, lovers... why not head in that direction?

A traveling merchant has an affair with a dryad, and returns home. His wife is happy to see him, and they embrace. But over the next couple of days she starts to change. Her skin starts to tan, her hair has a green tint, she starts behaving strangely. Listening, to something far off in the woods only she can hear. Then one day she just vanishes. If her husband spots her as she darts toward the forest, he is in for a shock. She doesn't even look human anymore.

Affects mortal women, not immortal fey. If that were the case, even the rumor of being a dryad-lover would be enough to turn a man into a social pariah.

I thought about having it affect mortal women, but decided it would change the flavour of Dryads too much. If their "pollen disease" only affects other fey females, then their consorts may not even know about it, and if they do they may just think its something the mysterious fairy folk do all the time. If it affected every female human they have congress with, people would be chopping down dryad groves across the land.

10-07-2009, 10:37 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Triton

Another of the underwater races who I suspect are rarely used, Tritons are rather like Merfolk, but with humanoid legs rather than a fish tail. (There's a big overlap between underwater beings - Tritons, Merfolk, Aquatic Elves etc. are all really the same monster - though I suppose you could say the same thing about orcs, hobgoblins, troglodytes etc.)

The entry opens with this intriguing line:

Quote:

"Tritons are rumored to be creatures from the elemental plane of Water that have been placed on the Prime Material plane for some purpose unknown to man."

I can't remember ever reading that before, and it puts a whole new spin on the creature. Admittedly this is the MM designer equivalent of phoning in adventure hooks (only one step up from "a wizard did it") but still, sets the imagination running. Are they interplanar guardians? Colonists from the elemental plane of Water who've been in the Prime Material so long they've forgotten their original homelands? Or is the reason hidden lore, known only by the elders and wisemen, who keep the matter secret from the rest...

In terms of society, Tritons are portrayed a little like elves - reclusive and nonviolent, except when their reclusivity is threatened. And as with elves there seems to be an undercurrent of cruelty to these underwater xenophobes - for the crime of entering into Triton territory one is stripped of all belongings and left 10 miles from sure to face "the fate of the seas"; if you are ruled innocent by the Triton court you get washed to shore safely. Otherwise you drown.

(This little vignette has possibilities. For starters, it implies that the Tritons have some power over the very ocean itself; can they only use it for deciding the fate of trespassers, or can they use it for other means? But aside from that, I think a great villain backstory would be a guy who was put out to "the fate of the seas", found

guilty, but nevertheless somehow managed to survive. How he did so is a mystery and his most closely guarded secret...)

10-07-2009, 12:44 PM

s/LaSH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I used a triton (OK, a reskinned elf with an otter) in Dungeon Damage. Underwater civilizations make you rethink a lot of assumptions about life - they have no fire, everything's got to be streamlined, clothes just slow you down, weird stuff like that.

10-08-2009, 10:52 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

I used a triton (OK, a reskinned elf with an otter) in Dungeon Damage. Underwater civilizations make you rethink a lot of assumptions about life - they have no fire, everything's got to be streamlined, clothes just slow you down, weird stuff like that.

There'd be no treasure except for gemstones and coral, for one thing. No way to extract precious metals from ore.

10-08-2009, 12:30 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

There'd be no treasure except for gemstones and coral, for one thing. No way to extract precious metals from ore.

Stonechipping and obsidian is the way to go.

And massive blood sacrifices to appease the sharks.

Perhaps all underwater cultures are based on Mesoamerica. Giant carved heads, blood-letting, uncanny calendars, lost ruins among the algae forests, smoking mirrors (the sun against the water's surface?), alien space gods. Feathered serpents might be sea serpents or kraken trailing great streamers of seaweed that have grown on them as they slept. The Incan foot post might be replaced by a network of trained swimmers who dash full speed down the continental shelf, passing the message to the next link in the chain when exhausted. Montezeuma's gold might become a great sieve, perhaps created for some obscure geological or astrological purpose, that just happens to filter out gold from the sea water.

10-08-2009, 01:44 PM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **s/LaSH**

I used a triton (OK, a reskinned elf with an otter) in Dungeon Damage. Underwater civilizations make you rethink a lot of assumptions about life - they have no fire, everything's got to be streamlined, clothes just slow you down, weird stuff like that.

The 3 dimensional nature of the universe is also a major difference - especially in areas where the sea bed is so deep the pressure down there will kill you.

If you go up, you're easy prey for diving Sea Rocs, too far down and pressure kills you if the Kraken don't.

Ranged combat would also be different - arrows and thrown weapons don't work as well in a thicker medium meaning combat would be face to face. That might affect warrior codes of conduct.

Land cities survive by flushing their pollution into the seas. A sea community bigger than a hamlet in a permanent location would need some method to avoid stewing in their own filth.

10-08-2009, 04:30 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Asmodai**

Land cities survive by flushing their pollution into the seas. A sea community bigger than a hamlet in a permanent location would need some method to avoid stewing in their own filth.

Maybe there's some sort of natural current like the North Atlantic Drift that everybody shits into and it gets carried off somewhere else.

Or maybe it all just floats to the surface.

Or maybe underwater cities are just really efficient. No fire means no polluting industry really. Only effluent, which lets face it will dissolve relatively quickly in water.

10-08-2009, 05:39 PM

kami2awa

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Stonechipping and obsidian is the way to go.

And massive blood sacrifices to appease the sharks.

Perhaps all underwater cultures are based on Mesoamerica. Giant carved heads, blood-letting, uncanny calendars, lost ruins among the algae forests, smoking mirrors (the sun against the water's surface?), alien space gods. Feathered serpents might be sea serpents or kraken trailing great streamers of seaweed that have grown on them as they slept. The Incan foot post might be replaced by a network of trained swimmers who dash full speed down the continental shelf, passing the message to the next link in the chain when exhausted. Montezuma's gold might become a great sieve, perhaps created for some obscure geological or astrological purpose, that just happens to filter out gold from the sea water.

I really like this idea; a civilisation without fire can reach the stone age, but no further - however, the Aztecs and Inca were technically Stone Age cultures because they did not work bronze or iron, but they were highly advanced civilisations with writing, large-scale construction, and complex government, religion and civil services (they even had public toilets). Although they did not work hard metal their goldsmithing was literally legendary. An underwater culture could be similar.

It is possible to work gold without heating it (it is malleable enough to hammer into shape) and underwater civilisations could get a lot of it from shipwrecks. Furthermore, heat sources are available in the form of underwater volcanoes (likely locations for civilisation anyway as the water is warmer).

10-08-2009, 07:31 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Asmodai**

Land cities survive by flushing their pollution into the seas. A sea community bigger than a hamlet in a permanent location would need some method to avoid stewing in their own filth.

There's an adventure hook - a long pipe appears in town overnight, leading into the sea further than anyone can follow easily. It is made of a strange, indestructible organic material, and soon starts discharging a mixture of fish heads and reeking goo into the Town Square.

Guess who gets to follow the pipe into the lightless depths and convince the owners that something needs to change? Hope it's someone reasonable, like sea elves, and not Tritons.

Perhaps the only way to stop it is to convince the town to upgrade their own sewerage discharge, and it then becomes a quest to find a wastewater engineer in a distant land...

10-09-2009, 02:56 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Feathered serpents might be sea serpents

Feathered serpent = Leafy sea dragons?

Well, since this is D&D, they need to be giant, man eating leafy sea dragons.

10-09-2009, 03:08 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **kami2awa**

It is possible to work gold without heating it (it is malleable enough to hammer into shape) and underwater civilisations could get a lot of it from shipwrecks.

Undersea dwellers might have some pretty odd ideas about surface dwellers. They don't understand "fire" or "arrows" or "air". Their main source of information about humans is from crashed pirate ships, so they assume all humans have pet monkeys and peg legs. One part cargo cult, one part the albatross from *The Little Mermaid*.

Perhaps most Tritons don't even believe that any sentient life exists in "outer space" (above the water's surface), and the occasional shipwreck is like the Roswell crash. So visiting the Tritons might be like an X-files UFO conspiracy story, but told from the perspective of the aliens. Why does the Triton king hide the truth from his citizens? What havoc will the air-breathing PCs cause just by visiting the Triton city (and thereby exposing the truth)? Are the Tritons peaceful or will they react violently to human beings? (The MM entry repeatedly notes that they are "reclusive" and "suspicious", so emphasizing their paranoid nature might be a good idea.)

Maybe the Tritons are at war against the Kuo-toa (or other underwater monster race). So they assume strangers from the surface are some sort of kuo-toa plot to infiltrate/sabotage the Triton kingdom. It's certainly more plausible of a story than the PCs being aliens from outer space.

10-09-2009, 03:45 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **kami2awa**

I really like this idea; a civilisation without fire can reach the stone age, but no further - however, the Aztecs and Inca were technically Stone Age cultures because they did not work bronze or iron, but they were highly advanced civilisations with writing, large-scale construction, and complex government, religion and civil services (they even had public toilets). Although they did not work hard metal their goldsmithing was literally legendary. An underwater culture could be similar.

It is possible to work gold without heating it (it is malleable enough to hammer into shape) and underwater civilisations could get a lot of it from shipwrecks. Furthermore, heat sources are available in the form of underwater volcanoes (likely locations for civilisation anyway as the water is warmer).

The malleable/ductile nature is a big plus. Gold is also the least chemically reactive of all metals, making it resistant to the corrosion caused by salt water. I'm not sure about the underground volcanoes, though. Volcanoes tend to throw out huge amounts of poisonous gas, ash, and other debris that would suffocate marine humanoids, and sufficient heat to work metal would tend to broil any would-be smiths. There might be a thriving trade with the few creatures who could withstand these environments. Perhaps an aquatic variation of the salamander?

Undersea vents would still be natural locations for cities or other submarine centers of population (the density of life around one is about 4 or 5 orders of magnitude greater in the real world), but approaching them too closely would be dangerous. These would also be the areas where captives from the surface are kept, because there is less chance of hypothermia.

Perhaps the area closer to the vents is the undersea equivalent of the underdark, with weird variants of the traditional races. But instead of having the ability to see in the dark, they have the ability to survive in the extreme environments like those surrounding a black smoker vent. Black aquatic elves and dwarves and ogres and ghouls with strange alien appearances and even stranger adaptations. Eyeless, with white squirming like bodies covered with a rough chitin carapace. Perhaps covered with a iron scales created by a colony of snails living on their skin, converting the minerals ejected by the vents into natural armor (this is based on the scaly-footed gastropod).

These might be the oases of the undersea, organized like a ring. Unlike the surface where the dark elves are distant and removed from the elves of the sun and the light, the black elves of the vents and the green elves of the open sea would create communities in concentric rings, and be forced to interact with their uncanny brethren. A thriving trade-town on the outside, who deal with the strange black smoker variants further in, who in turn engage the denizens of the centermost ring who dwell on top of the plume or ejected magma itself: The demons and devils, and creatures of doused, smoldering fire.

10-10-2009, 07:24 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Triton

I can't remember ever reading that before, and it puts a whole new spin on the creature.

Admittedly this is the MM designer equivalent of phoning in adventure hooks (only one step up from "**a wizard did it**") but still, sets the imagination running. Are they interplanar guardians?

Colonists from the elemental plane of Water who've been in the Prime Material so long they've forgotten their original homelands? Or is the reason hidden lore, known only by the elders and wisemen, who keep the matter secret from the rest...

Listen carefully, and I'll pass on a story a Sea-Caballero told me.

Neptune sent the Tritons into the prime material so that wizards **do not do it**. They are tasked with preventing mad surface dwelling mages from meddling with the sea. Why do you think they have 90% magic resistance?

Remember that stormcaller wizard who was found impaled on a trident, with all her guards and apprentices drowned on dry land. Who did you think was responsible?

10-18-2009, 05:29 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

[Bloody hell, a week since the last post. I do apologise. Work and real life got in the way.]

Troglodyte

First things first, let's say straight away that the illustration for the Troglodyte is one of my absolutely favourites in the MM. Not only is it an entirely plausible anthropomorphic lizard, there is a peculiar grace to the piece; the pose is in a strange way not unlike that of a Greek or Roman statue. It lends the Troglodyte the air of a noble savage, which doesn't at all fit with the description but is compelling nonetheless. Suffice to say, Diterlizzi has vision.

I also like the Troglodyte a lot as a stand alone monster, despite the fact that (as with most humanoid villain races) its entry is actually rather bland. (It contains reams and reams of meat and potatoes information that is of practical use but little imaginative flair. Okay, maybe it's important to know that there are 100% as many females as males in a Troglodyte clan, but...) Troglodytes are more interesting in the playing than the reading: tougher orcs and hobgoblins, more naturalistic and primitive, and with a cool chameleon power.

They are perfect, in other words, for a more low-tech, perhaps even stone-age game - or, alternatively, one set far away from any form of civilisation whatsoever. The kind of place where fire-building is high-tech. Troglodytes are the kind of primal foes who you can imagine fighting in a Lost Land of the Dinosaurs-style plateau.

The main spur to the imagination aside from that is the Troglodyte hatred for humans; they despise mankind above all else. Why? Is it our distrustful smell and irksome manner, or something deeper?

10-18-2009, 08:27 AM

YojimboC

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, it had to happen. Cleaning out my parents' attic, I finally found my copy of the Monstrous Manual. Just in time for the end of the T's.

On the topic of smelting ore and fashioning armor or weapons beneath the sea - wouldn't magic go a long way towards mitigating this sort of thing? Or perhaps just using different materials enhanced by magic, making them just as strong as steel anyway. A +3 obsidian dagger is still +3, after all.

10-18-2009, 06:54 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One thing about trogs that I noticed recently - they are listed as having an encounter frequency of **Common**. This makes them *more common*, in theory, than such D&D staples as hobgoblins and kobolds!

And yes, the illustration is brilliant.

10-18-2009, 07:41 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

One thing about trogs that I noticed recently - they are listed as having an encounter frequency of **Common**. This makes them *more common*, in theory, than such D&D staples as hobgoblins and kobolds!

Perhaps the real question is: Why? What social, cultural, or biological advantages make them so prevalent?

Perhaps it's all in the eggs.

What if their eggs were rough, erratically shaped. Almost indistinguishable from loose rocks or stones. Like many egg-layers, they lay dozens, hundreds of eggs at a time. And like many reptiles, they don't care for them once the eggs are laid. Cast aside like beads of water, as the tribe travels. And as long as the temperature is relatively stable (and it always is, under the earth), the eggs can last indefinitely until the conditions are right. Until they're exposed to water.

The scattered talus at the bottom of the slope, that scree under that cavernous overhang? Scattered everywhere. Waiting to be fertile, to grow. To spawn. Sometimes dozens, hundreds of years. Perhaps even longer. But everytime there's a flood, there's a new infestation. A new creche of trogs. Come together, across wide distances, homing in on that pungent scent.

10-18-2009, 09:17 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The main spur to the imagination aside from that is the Troglodyte hatred for humans; they despise mankind above all else. Why? Is it our distrustful smell and irksome manner, or something deeper?

Why not use the reptile people concept Howard thought of? They were the ones to give humanity basic technology and now humans keep them down by slaughtering them and not allowing the trogs to advance. Orcs and hobgoblins are proof that technology in the wrong hands can make for difficult times in the future.

10-19-2009, 12:02 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The scattered talus at the bottom of the slope, that scree under that cavernous overhang? Scattered everywhere. Waiting to be fertile, to grow. To spawn. Sometimes dozens, hundreds of years. Perhaps even longer. But everytime there's a flood, there's a new infestation. A new creche of trogs. Come together, across wide distances, homing in on that pungent scent.

Hmm, that would imply that their society and technology is mostly or entirely based on instinct and inherited memories. They have no parents or elders to teach them the Way of the Troglodyte, just their own programmed nature.

No wonder they seem stuck in the stone age, many of the egg-lines have not learned a new skill for hundreds of generations.

10-19-2009, 12:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Why not use the reptile people concept Howard thought of? They were the ones to give humanity basic technology and now humans keep them down by slaughtering them and not allowing the trogs to advance. Orcs and hobgoblins are proof that technology in the wrong hands can make for difficult times in the future.

The "they hate the warmbloods because they stole their planet" seems to be quite a common explanation of the reptile races' antipathy towards humanoids.

I'm sure we can come up with a few other explanations.

Hmm...

Troglodytes have a hatred for humanity because they like them too much.

Like the taste, that is.

Human flesh is a potent drug to a Troglodyte. Once they've tasted it, many can think of nothing else but getting their next fix of "pink". Before they met humans, the troglodytes were the noble savages in the dT illustration Noisms referred to. Wise creatures in perfect tune with nature, who passed their ample leisure time with poetry and philosophy (although the beauty of the latter is not appreciated by humanoids, since they can't understand the Troglodyte's "Stink-Speech".)

Within a few generations of exposure to humans, mainly due to the action of goblinoid dealers in human flesh and 'juice, the vast majority of Trogs are degenerate brutes.

10-19-2009, 12:57 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Hmm, that would imply that their society and technology is mostly or entirely based on instinct and inherited memories. They have no parents or elders to teach them the Way of the Troglodyte, just their own programmed nature.

No wonder they seem stuck in the stone age, many of the egg-lines have not learned a new skill for hundreds of generations.

Nah, there're too many of those.

Perhaps they're just friggin' brilliant... at least while they're still growing. A period of just a few weeks. But during that period, they're the perfect Batesian mimics, the ideal pupil, the transhumanists' post-singularity wet dream of an evolved consciousness.

They're drawn to each other by smell. Think monarch butterflies, except really really stinky. Seven miles upwind is nothing. During the downpour, they seek each other, rambling their way across the miles. As they pass the various scattered enclaves of humanoid and inhumanoid races, they pick up random bits and pieces of culture and technology purely by observation, as they hide under piles of feces.

Once they come together, sisters and brothers of the Most Illuminatingly Fragrant Stench, there is a wondrous blossoming of philosophy and knowledge as they share what they know at hyperspeeds using a language they invent on the spot. They synthesize their collective knowledge and then branch out, making intuitive leaps in a dozen scientific fields. They come up with amazing and perfectly sensible solutions to all kinds of technological and philosophical problems. They create a perfect little utopia.

For a week or so. Because, in the back of their minds, they can feel it. Gnawing, eating away. They know they're a degenerate race, or will be. But they didn't/won't degenerate from some pure ancestral pseudo-Aryan stock. No, they're degenerating from *themselves*. They can feel it, like an itch. Each day the mental jumps are smaller. Each day what was once clear is fuzzier and fuzzier, until it becomes opaque.

That's why the trogs we know are so hateful. They remember the wonder, the glory. They know they were the wisest, the smartest. But they have become so base, so dull. They hate you because they hate themselves. That spark of brilliance they see, or at least the trace of an IQ approaching room temperature, is all it takes to remind them. To set them off.

Their culture is a composite, a mosaic. A mixing and mingling, threads from a dozen nearby cultures half-woven into brilliant tapestry, now crumpled into an unfinished mass on the floor after the loom of their mind bent and shattered. Stone age on average, perhaps. But they might still do one or two things remarkably well. A charcoal pit for infusing iron with carbon to make the original adamant. An odd, exotic high-level spell. A fluting and beautiful song of sorrow and longing that has been bastardized into a war chant. That's all they retain.

They only stay with their sisters and brothers, the reminders of their unconceivable past, because they have to. They hate them, as well. The living reminders. But they can't leave, because they truly have no where else to go. Not even another tribe. Because troglodytes don't -- can't -- work together. There is no common ground. No pan-troglodyte culture. Each is different, unique. An unrelated corrupted synthesis of a hundred local flavors.

Except for the biology, they are more akin to you or I, than each other.

10-19-2009, 01:00 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Within a few generations of exposure to humans, mainly due to the action of goblinoid dealers in human flesh and 'juice, the vast majority of Trogs are degenerate brutes.

I think I would rather go with something simple like "humans smell bad". :D

10-19-2009, 02:54 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

In the prehistoric, all-reptilian game I ran many years ago, troglodytes were the Despoilers. They were once lizardfolk, in tune with nature, relatively peaceful, living in small tribes in the forests and swamps. But a dark cult of the toad-lizard Lagozed emerged among them, and these splinter cultists took his message of selfishness, greed and spite to a whole new level. They produced a warped sect of anti-druids who turned a vast part of the continent into a blighted forest where nothing natural could grow just to prevent the other lizardfolk from having it. These cultists were cursed by the powers of nature, to be as ugly and rotten outside as they were in.

And then the debased, corrupted now-trogs killed 90% of the lizardfolk on the planet. Because they were still spiteful bastards, but now had the forces of the Abyss on their side. By the game's "present day", they were on one side of the global proxy-Blood War. They were locked in a stalemate with the kobolds, who would much rather exploit and enslave than befoul and kill.

10-19-2009, 04:53 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Whenever I think of troglodytes, I always think that old side-scrolling beat 'em up that Capcom released in the arcades. Troglodytes were the mid-level mooks, and unlike your typical orcs and goblins, they had style. Leaping and in flipping, stunning with gas emitted from their bodies, using unusual weapons. They were like ninjas. That sort of colored my impression away from a lost race of stone-age brutes.

10-19-2009, 05:18 AM

Hellzon

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Funny how troglodytes differ throughout sources. My first impression was "crocodile-men"*, so I was quite surprised when non-D&D sources (mainly Dwarf Fortress and Stephen King's Dark Tower) had them as quasi-neanderthals.

*) From Forge of Fury.

10-19-2009, 05:46 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

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Let's see, lizardmen + nasty corruption -> troglodytes makes me think of troglodytes as lizardmen with a reptilefolk version of the zombie virus. They're smelly and want to eat you because they're diseased half-dead. The lucky think is that they can only infect other lizardmen.

Hmm, or kobolds, because everyone loves pygmy zombies, how much better are pygmy reptile zombies with delusions of dragonhood.

10-20-2009, 06:06 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hellzon**

Funny how troglodytes differ throughout sources. My first impression was "crocodile-men"*, so I was quite surprised when non-D&D sources (mainly Dwarf Fortress and Stephen King's Dark Tower) had them as quasi-neanderthals.

*) From Forge of Fury.

The latter is actually a much better fit with the name, since "troglodyte" means cave-dweller, and the name used to be commonly applied to cave-men and anthropoid apes. That's why the common chimpanzee's scientific name is *Pan troglodytes*.

10-20-2009, 10:27 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hellzon**

Funny how troglodytes differ throughout sources. My first impression was "crocodile-men"*, so I was quite surprised when non-D&D sources (mainly Dwarf Fortress and Stephen King's Dark Tower) had them as quasi-neanderthals.

*) From Forge of Fury.

In the Fighting Fantasy universe troglodytes were small, neanderthal-like subterranean brutes.

10-20-2009, 11:43 PM

Derion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

In the Fighting Fantasy universe troglodytes were small, neanderthal-like subterranean brutes.

They're actually much more goblin-like than neanderthal-like if I recall.

10-25-2009, 04:46 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Troll

Trolls are one of my absolute favourite monsters, and I'd be surprised if any other D&D players said different. There's something elegantly simple about them - all they are is a big, stupid, powerful humanoid that can regenerate - and yet genuinely compelling: a relentless carnivore that knows no fear and wants only to eat. Flee for your lives! etc. etc. There's also something iconic and indisputably *D&D* about a quest to chase off a troll from its den, isn't there?

D&D artists have also consistently done a good job making trolls look creepy; the long thin nose is a masterstroke in my opinion. (A long thin nose is always a surefire sign of a creepy monster.) Diterlizzi's pictures in this entry are no exception. The desert troll illustration is definitely a top 5-er for me.

Anyway, while I love the troll-under-the-bridge as much as the next man, I'm also a fan of trolls in unexpected settings. The troll innkeeper. The king with a troll bodyguard. The troll gaoler. The troll archmage. The troll ship's captain. And so on. Something that makes the characters suspicious and leery. Although you can only use that routine once or twice before it becomes old.

Well, the troll entry is gargantuan, so let's get to it. After the ordinary troll we have:

Giant Two-Headed Troll

Not just a big two-headed troll, but a troll/ettin crossbreed. So somewhere in the world there are either ettins shagging trolls of their own volition, or there's an archmage encouraging them to. Not a pleasant image, although I'm sure there's a porn sub-genre related to it.

Freshwater Troll (Scrag)

As it says on the tin, a troll that lives in rivers and lakes. Known as a devious hunter which scatters baubles along the riverside and pounces on greedy bypassers. Famous as the quintessential Troll Under The Bridge.

Saltwater Troll (Marine Scrag)

These creatures live in "shallow ocean caves" or beneath city docks (which I think is a great idea - a marine scrag is going to be a feature of the next coastal city I come up with). As expected, they like to eat people.

Desert Troll

These trolls are immune to fire, but instead cannot regenerate damage they suffer from normal water. They are also intelligent and able to change their skin, chameleon like, to match their surroundings.

Spectral Troll (Troll Wraith)

An undead troll that despises all life, etc. etc. There's a lot that's interesting about the Spectral Troll, not least the fact that in sunlight it fades away, only to reappear in the exact same place as soon as night falls. Also, humanoids that a Spectral Troll kills *become Spectral Trolls themselves* - although frankly the wording of the entry makes it sound like it might mean that they actually become spectres.

Giant Troll

Self-evidently, a giant troll. They have the rather nice tendency of grabbing one opponent and wielding the unfortunate like a weapon with which to beat others.

Ice Troll

A smaller and more intelligent version of the troll which "is probably the result of magical experimentation" (snore). Ice trolls like to keep humans and animals as livestock to keep them going through the summer months, and their bodies can be used in the manufacture of various cold-based magic items.

Spirit Troll

Sages make an appearance at this stage, though they aren't mentioned by name - there are just "schools of thought" which

present evidence that the Spirit Troll is a cross between a troll and an invisible stalker (!). Its attacks can leech hit points from enemies to heal itself.

10-25-2009, 05:25 PM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, an idea popped into my mind when you mentioned "nontraditional Troll roles," so I'll make that my contribution to the idea pile:

Karmaug Starjaws is a troll of above-average (by troll standards) intellect. Coming across a recently-descended meteor, it salvaged the metal and strongarmed a group of humanoids into crafting a set of ragged meteoric iron teeth to replace its own. Residual effects of the unusual iron caused Karmaug to change in three notable ways:

- 1.) The skin on its head, chest and arms turns a distinct red. Its hair turns white.
- 2.) When angry or in combat, goutts of brilliant flame lick out from its jaws, burning its victims.
- 3.) It no longer fears fire and cannot be harmed by magical or nonmagical flames.

Using the advantages these changes granted it over its peers, Karmaug has subjugated the other trolls in the region, forcing them to provide tribute in terms of food and trinkets. This pressure has driven the others to increased ferocity in raiding, causing trouble for local travelers and villages. Additionally, Karmaug's former rivals - other trolls of notable strength, intellect, or ambition - have been pushed out of their old haunts by the threat he poses, and are now attempting to consolidate power in new regions. They might move into a vacated dungeon or section thereof, and the smarter of them are hunting for magic items that will let them best Karmaug.

Karmaug is a standard Troll of unusual intelligence (Very, 11-12) with above-average hit points (something like 2 above average per HD, 45 hp). Its flaming bite inflicts an additional 1d6 or 1d8 fire damage on a hit, and it's immune to fire damage. It is usually accompanied by 1-4 normal Trolls who it abuses physically and verbally. Karmaug will generally let these "servants" take the brunt of any organized assault.

Karmaug considers itself a "figure of note" in the local humanoid community, and might serve as a common enemy of a tribe of humanoids, or provide support (for a price) to a group that fears adventurers. Karmaug might hold sway over a section of a cave complex, use its tribute to purchase a stake in a mercenary company, or even get involved with a more powerful foe, especially mystics (Karmaug believes that additional fantastic additions might unlock further power.) Even when clearly outmatched, Karmaug considers itself the intellectual equal or superior of everyone it encounters - it is vain, and affects modes of speech and posturing that are intended to affirm its mental superiority. Notably, Karmaug is not hunched when it walks, instead striding much like a normal human. This position is uncomfortable but appears distinctive and provides an apparent height advantage over normal, slouched trolls.

10-25-2009, 07:32 PM

DeeCee

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Mentioning these because I was reading the magazine just the other day: Dragon issue #199 also brought us "Those Terrible Trolls", which added the Trollhound, Fire Troll, Gray Troll, Phaze Troll, and Stone Troll to the mix.

Also, something in Planescape (can't remember which supplement, might have been the Elemental Planes one) mentioned that on the plane of Ice, there's a huge troll battlefield where the combatants are frozen in a field of ice, with weapons and all. I don't know why, but that really piqued my interest. Even back in EQ2, the idea of trolls wielding the weapons of civilization, or armour, held my interest. But then, I like the idea of savage trolls just tearing things apart with terrible claws and sharklike teeth too.

Perhaps I just love trolls.

Great, now I'm getting a campaign jones. Curse you rpg.net!

10-25-2009, 07:52 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I posted this to another thread a few months ago:

They could be flayed and placed in molds that force their flesh to regrow in shapes that are not standard troll. They could also do this to themselves by removing parts from other trolls. One wants a tail- it would hack off the arm of another troll (which will regrow) and shape it with primitive alchemy so that it will be the right size and shape as well as attach to the spine.

Anyone use anything like this?

10-25-2009, 08:16 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I posted this to another thread a few months ago:

They could be flayed and placed in molds that force their flesh to regrow in shapes that are not standard troll. They could also do this to themselves by removing parts from other trolls. One wants a tail- it would hack off the arm of another troll (which will regrow) and shape it with primitive alchemy so that it will be the right size and shape as well as attach to the spine.

Anyone use anything like this?

That's actually rather similar to the way bladerager trolls are made in 4e (think Wolverine, except made out of troll instead of mutant Canadian). They're basically cut into bits and allowed to regrow, encouraged by alchemical solutions, around a bladed iron frame. The result is... not exactly a standard troll, but it is very good at mincing people.

Evidently the process is not exactly stable; when they are very, very injured (a *lot*), the alchemical treatments and metal contaminants contrive to throw the trollish regeneration process sufficiently out of whack that the beast tears itself apart with great force, launching razor shrapnel some distance in all directions.

10-25-2009, 08:37 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Huh. Bladeragers are in the MM IV or V but they didn't explode when killed. There just were in extreme pain all the time due to the plates and other metal bolted or screwed into their flesh.

10-25-2009, 08:52 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

We had a troll technomancer in Shadowrun. He was an internet troll. He trolled our internets, and he was a troll.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I posted this to another thread a few months ago:

They could be flayed and placed in molds that force their flesh to regrow in shapes that are not

standard troll. They could also do this to themselves by removing parts from other trolls. One wants a tail- it would hack off the arm of another troll (which will regrow) and shape it with primitive alchemy so that it will be the right size and shape as well as attach to the spine.

Anyone use anything like this?

Bonsai Troll! (Remember Bonsai Kitten?)

10-25-2009, 10:28 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

Karmaug Starjaws is a troll of above-average (by troll standards) intellect. Coming across a recently-descended meteor, it salvaged the metal and strongarmed a group of humanoids into crafting a set of ragged meteoric iron teeth to replace its own. Residual effects of the unusual iron caused Karmaug to change in three notable ways:

1.) The skin on its head, chest and arms turns a distinct red. Its hair turns white.

A perpetual blush? He'd probably become known as the "blushing troll". Except to his face, of course. I imagine he'd *hate* the nickname....

I also like the bonsai troll.

But to go off on a little tangent, let's compare the two editions:

Quote:

Originally Posted by **AD&D 2nd Edition Monstrous Manual**

When using an edged weapon, it is possible to sever the thin limbs of a troll (a natural 20 with an edged weapon is needed). Severed limbs continue to fight after separation from the body (hands squeeze, heads bite if stepped on, etc.). Attacks by severed limbs are at normal chances to hit. Separated limbs fight for the remainder of the battle, then scuttle back and rebind with the body once the battle is over. Limbs unable to reach the body to die within 24 hours, but this is of little consequence since trolls regenerate lost body parts (including the head) within a week. If a troll is dismembered and scattered, the largest surviving piece regenerates. The others die within one day if they cannot rejoin that piece.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **AD&D 1st Edition Monster Manual**

Regeneration repairs damage at 3 hit points per round; this regeneration includes the rebonding of severed members. The loathsome members of a troll have the ability to fight on even if severed from the body; a hand can claw and strangle, the head bite, etc. Total dismemberment will not slay a troll, for its parts will slither and scuttle together, to rejoin, and the troll will arise whole and ready to continue combat. To kill a troll, the monster must be burned or immersed in acid, any separate pieces being treated in the same fashion or they create a whole again in 3–18 melee rounds.

They nerfed the troll.

I really like the open-ended version in first edition. There's no time limit on how long troll pieces will survive. Adventurers might deliberately maim, then capture and ride off with pieces of trolls. They couldn't leave them behind, after all, because they'd eventually rejoin and you'd have a whole troll again. This would be an effective

way of reducing the efficacy of the local troll tribes, without requiring a prolonged confrontation. There might be trolls with missing hands, arms, legs... heads. The headless might be used by their kin as shock trolls. Point them in the right direction, and then they flail away like bizarre reaping machines.

The ever-mercenary adventurers could then sell the pieces to scholars to study. There might be a whole department decided to this at the local university, with labs stocked with dozens, hundreds, of pieces, all undergoing experiments in grafting, animation, and just investigation as they try to determine the nature and source of the troll's restorative properties, and use it.

You could have troll-golems, troll mecha, troll cloaks and armor. Fillet a limb, separate the flesh from the bone. Toss the bone into a cast, then pour in boiling metal. Take the metal piece with the troll core, and attach to a golem. Is it animate? Then take the filleted skin and sinew and muscle, and wrap it around a frame. Viola, a muscle-augmenting exoskeleton — that has a tendency to try to eat its wearer. Make leather armor out of the troll hide. Tough, perpetually restoring itself. And without the muscle, it should be safe, shouldn't it? Just requires a daily shave and trim, to prevent it from growing out of hand. Or a cloak. Let the cloak soak up the damage from the white dragon's breath first, before you take any yourself. How many hit points does the skin and fat of a troll have, again?

This could cause a problem if some deluded activist group gets it into their heads that separating all these scuttling limbs from their original bodies and performing horrible experiments on them is cruel. They might break in, set all the body parts free free. And, like similarly foolish characters in zombie movies, they'd probably all die as the super-strong limbs rend their saviors to pieces.

But there's still a problem. All these limbs. Slithering and scuttling. There would be a plague of crawling green hands, scabrous hopping feet, rolling heads filled with fangs. Either heading off in unison toward the moors (if we assume the location sense that allows them to reunite in combat extends that far), or heading off (ahem) in a random direction.

Since universities are generally surrounded by major population centers, let the attack of the killer troll body parts commence. The party might be called in to save the city from clawed hands jumping out of cupboards. Or they might see it in the distance: The city, burning. Against this lurid backdrop, they spot a wave heading toward them, across the grassland. Something is moving, low to the ground. Something too low to see, only visible by the wake it is making in the grasses. Heading toward the moors....

10-25-2009, 10:51 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Another aspect that went away with the nerfing: What if there is only *one* troll?

Blaming a horrible magical experiment is trite, when there are all kinds of other possibilities. Perhaps it was some kind of disgusting, cancerous growth growing from some inaccessible place on the god of mischief. There might be myths and legends about how the trickster had to fool his own brother into cutting it off, to restore his body to its original pristine perfection. Except, the discarded and forgotten piece became sapient. That's the troll. The one troll. The trollfather.

Perfect regeneration, in all ways except against fire and acid. Our troll is immortal, perpetual. Unless slain, of course.

But then expanding humans or dwarves or elves came along, and with their shiny swords cut him to pieces, and let him lie. One piece might have fallen into a hole, another into a raging stream. This happens many times, over the years. And each piece becomes a new troll.

Where there was one, there are now a multitude.

Even worse, the troll brotherhood might figure out how to exploit this property. They are another one of those creatures like vampires or werewolves that, when the conditions are right, can spread like wildfire. Imagine a roaring bonfire on the moors. Trolls proving their courage by leaping through the flames. Painted, with exotic colors. Filed teeth, spikes driven through their chests to bring the cleansing and restorative pain. Feasting on plump spitted halflings, like humans do on a drumstick. Except we generally don't do it while the bird is still alive.

Then, when gorged on demihuman flesh, they bring out the blades. Chipped flint or obsidian, or captured cleavers or polearms. Maybe a bit blunt, not razor sharp. But trolls are hideously strong. Even so, like medieval beheadings, it may take

several tries to cut all the way through. But it can be done. The remaining halflings look on in horror as the trolls hold down one of their own — and chop off an arm, or a leg. Then watch awestruck as the stump stops bleeding, as new skin grows. Then the limb bulges and swells, and before many minutes have passed the troll is clenching a new fist, or stamping around on a new foot. Then they notice, belatedly, that the same thing is happening to the severed part. Bulging, swelling, growing. Not a new limb, but a new *troll*. Before long, there is a new emaciated figured standing next to his progenitor.

Unfortunately for our halflings, it's probably *very* hungry.

This is the trollplague. Orcs hordes have nothing on trolls when it comes to replenishing their numbers.

10-25-2009, 11:04 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One of Clockwork Golem Workshop's pdfs has an idea of people who have had troll blood end up in their wounds- they don't have regeneration (just faster normal healing) and the ability to not die when hacked up. The number of negative hit points they can reach before dying can get a bit excessive, esp with a prestige class based on the concept. They still are down for the fight when they have -CON hp (or lower) but they won't die from the wounds.

10-25-2009, 11:17 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

One of Clockwork Golem Workshop's pdfs has an idea of people who have had troll blood end up in their wounds- they don't have regeneration (just faster normal healing) and the ability to not die when hacked up. The number of negative hit points they can reach before dying can get a bit excessive, esp with a prestige class based on the concept. They still are down for the fight when they have -CON hp (or lower) but they won't die from the wounds.

That's fucking awesome.

Adventurers should totally be able to buy troll blood for that purpose.

In fact, you know all those healing potions you've been drink over the years, evar wondered what's in them...

10-26-2009, 02:17 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hm. If they made a city out of the Tarrasque... I could easily see a family of *spriggans* living in a war-troll.

gnaw gnaw gnaw gnaw gnaw

10-26-2009, 03:26 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Lessee... a few trollish tidbits:

In my campaign, one of the more exotic forms of rations were "daka-meat", which was a plug of troll flesh in a can. It was fairly flavorless, so it needed to be properly cooked and heavily seasoned, but as long as you left a little scrap of flesh in the bottom of the can, it would grow back. Just make sure you seal the can back up *very* tightly...

In the same game, the PCs fought an insectoid troll with the nasty habit of ripping off one of his arms and using it as a weapon. More reach!

In the Pathfinder campaign setting, it's been mentioned that there's a sect of troll seers who divine the future by the reading of entrails--their own. They slit themselves open, stir around with their guts to augur, then stuff themselves back in before the hole seals.

10-26-2009, 04:09 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

In the Pathfinder campaign setting, it's been mentioned that there's a sect of troll seers who divine the future by the reading of entrails--their own. They slit themselves open, stir around with their guts to augur, then stuff themselves back in before the hole seals.

Troll hauspices. I rather like that. If trolls are interpreted as more civilized (to take the Roman analogy further, imagine a patrician with an "aquiline" -- i.e. hatchet-shaped instead of string-beanish -- nose), trolls might be at the forefront of medical science as well. Though I imagine they'd lose more than their share of patients because they'd have a hard time comprehending the dangers of shock.

10-26-2009, 05:04 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

That's fucking awesome.

Adventurers should totally be able to buy troll blood for that purpose.

If they want to turn green and rubbery. The dwarves mentioned getting wounded by trolls and then being splashed by their blood become outcasts because of the obvious taint.

10-26-2009, 05:13 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

A perpetual blush? He'd probably become known as the "blushing troll". Except to his face, of course. I imagine he'd hate the nickname....

Karmaug the Bashful!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

That's fucking awesome.

Adventurers should totally be able to buy troll blood for that purpose.

In fact, you know all those healing potions you've been drink over the years, evar wondered what's in them...

You've just diagnosed the actual cause of the steady increase in HP totals as editions have progressed.

10-26-2009, 06:34 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**
Lessee... a few trollish tidbits:

In my campaign, one of the more exotic forms of rations were "daka-meat", which was a plug of troll flesh in a can. It was fairly flavorless, so it needed to be properly cooked and heavily seasoned, but as long as you left a little scrap of flesh in the bottom of the can, it would grow back. Just make sure you seal the can back up *very* tightly...

I think pretty much every D&D group has come across the idea of harvesting trolls as an unlimited food source. Just have a troll securely chained in the back of the butcher shop, and the butch can take off a slice for each customer and have it grow back for the next customer in line.

I imagine the preparation for it to be similar to that of surume to make it palatable (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dried_s...id#Preparation).

10-26-2009, 11:31 AM

Zartes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Asmodai**
I think pretty much every D&D group has come across the idea of harvesting trolls as an unlimited food source. Just have a troll securely chained in the back of the butcher shop, and the butch can take off a slice for each customer and have it grow back for the next customer in line.

I imagine the preparation for it to be similar to that of surume to make it palatable (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dried_s...id#Preparation).

i was about to say that it'd have to be cooked really well to avoid it growing in the adventurer's stomach... but then I realized that the stomach acid would deal with the regeneration problem.

Does that mean you can kill a troll by chaining him up and puking on him? :D

(that would explain why warhammer trolls developed their famous puking attack)

10-26-2009, 01:04 PM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I can just picture the scene, after a long battle the weary adventurers are about to sit down for a well-deserved rest.

"Not so fast!" the party wizard intones, "to truly vanquish a troll, you might eat it, piece by piece."

"Dig in," he says, waving a piece of troll meat around on his dagger than popping it into his mouth.

But yeah, Trolls compete with other trolls for food, mates, etc. It would make sense for them to develop a puking acid attack to do that. (The difficulty is, WFB Trolls are only vulnerable to fire, not acid, IIRC.)

10-26-2009, 06:36 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Troll

Trolls are one of my absolute favourite monsters, and I'd be surprised if any other D&D players said different. There's something elegantly simple about them - all they are is a big, stupid, powerful humanoid that can regenerate - and yet genuinely compelling: a relentless carnivore that knows no fear and wants only to eat. Flee for your lives! etc. etc. There's also something iconic and indisputably *D&D* about a quest to chase off a troll from its den, isn't there?

They're one of my favourites too. However, I like more variety in trolls: Some trolls are intelligent, talking creatures and can be negotiated with, although most are none-to-smart and easily deceived, they can be very sneaky and a few are terrifyingly cunning, other trolls are irrational beasts, nothing but raging appetite in scaly humanoid form. Some are hulking giants, some are tiny creatures that sneak into peasant's cottages to steal their babies. Further, I'd rather trolls have a wider range of powers apart the standard regeneration - some have skin as hard as diamond, rendering them practically immune to weapons, some have blood so corrosive it dissolves anything (or, if you're unlucky, anyone) who wounds them, some are so hideous the sight of them paralyses whoever sees them with disgust and dread, et cetera et cetera.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Anyway, while I love the troll-under-the-bridge as much as the next man, I'm also a fan of trolls in unexpected settings. The troll innkeeper. The king with a troll bodyguard. The troll gaoler. The troll archmage. The troll ship's captain. And so on. Something that makes the characters suspicious and leery. Although you can only use that routine once or twice before it becomes old.

Definitely! There was troll merchant, pirate and hotel-keeper in my last campaign.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Giant Two-Headed Troll

Not just a big two-headed troll, but a troll/ettin crossbreed. So somewhere in the world there are either ettins shagging trolls of their own volition, or there's an archmage encouraging them to. Not a pleasant image, although I'm sure there's a porn sub-genre related to it.

SNIP

Spirit Troll

Sages make an appearance at this stage, though they aren't mentioned by name - there are just "schools of thought" which present evidence that the Spirit Troll is a cross between a troll and an invisible stalker (!).

Gah! I'm not sure which conjures up the most unpleasant images, imaging a troll and an ettin doing the nasty, or a troll apparently having if off with thin air!:eek:

I can understand the ettin, since they're both giant(-ish) creatures, but why would a troll fancy an invisible stalker? Heck, how would it even find one?

Hmm, trolls have a very keen sense of smell, right, so now I'm visualising the following scenario...

Invisible Stalker wandering through swamp, a lean green form rises out of the water and leans its head over the stalker's shoulder.

Smiling Troll :D: "You sure has a pretty smell".

Although, it makes me want to have a bunch of Trolls and Invisible Stalkers working together, maybe led by a Spirit Troll. The trolls are the muscle, the stalkers the scouts - flying across the land to find a caravan of travelers, waiting until they camp and silently murdering the guards before the trolls make their charge.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Saltwater Troll (Marine Scrag)

These creatures live in "shallow ocean caves" or beneath city docks (which I think is a great idea - a marine scrag is going to be a feature of the next coastal city I come up with). As expected, they like to eat people.

Good heavens, you'd think a 10' tall green monster that climbs out onto the dock and eats people would close down the port! Maybe the scrag is running a protection racket - give me livestock, treasure and an annual human sacrifice or I'll wreck your ships and kill your sailors.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Desert Troll

These trolls are immune to fire, but instead cannot regenerate damage they suffer from normal water. They are also intelligent and able to change their skin, chameleon like, to match their surroundings.

I came up with something similar in the Salt Troll, which lived in magically polluted saline wastes. It was had caustic blood and was resistant to fire but vulnerable to water plus doubly-vulnerable to acid.

10-27-2009, 03:04 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Self-evidently, a giant troll. They have the rather nice tendency of grabbing one opponent and wielding the unfortunate like a weapon with which to beat others.

I'm totally stealing that for some sort of 4th edition monster. It sounds very like a 4e monster's trick:

Grabbing Fist: (*Standard basic melee, at will*) +14 vs. AC; 1d10+6 and grabbed (until escape).

Bash'em With Their Friends (*Standard; Melee; Recharge 5,6*) Only usable while grabbing an enemy, and targets a different enemy +14 vs. Reflex; 2d12+6 damage and grabbed enemy takes the same damage.

Or some such, depending on level of the monster.

10-27-2009, 03:13 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

A recent-ish Dragon article on Eberron involved a village of monsters where their primary food source was troll meat, from trolls chained up in the basements of the food halls. They had to heavily season the meat to make it palatable, even by monster standards.

10-27-2009, 03:54 AM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Long ago and far away... like, earlier this decade, my friends were playing a game of 3E. Their character were on a river barge heading for the next big city and one of them had decided to go fishing off the stern of the boat.

At which point one of the players got up and headed for the bathroom.

While he was gone, the party was suddenly attacked by a very angry Scrag with a fish hook in her mouth. The fight went quickly, but it was still rough. A moment later, the player who was gone returned from the bathroom and finds out that everybody's half dead.

"What happened?" he asked, "What were you doing?"

The reply came, "Trolling."

10-27-2009, 05:27 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Ginkomortus, that is hilarious.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

I'm totally stealing that for some sort of 4th edition monster. It sounds very like a 4e monster's trick:

It does indeed! They thought the same thing, in fact. I thought that was a neat callback, when noisms mentioned it.

10-27-2009, 05:37 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Trolls are always fun to use. They're also some of the most world-breaking monsters in (A)D&D; apart from fire and acid, they're practically unkillable! I hate to think what kind of an ecological damage a pack of trolls does to a region...

10-27-2009, 06:03 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

Hm. If they made a city out of the Tarrasque... I could easily see a family of [spriggans](#) living in a war-troll.

gnaw gnaw gnaw gnaw gnaw

Registered only link dude.

10-27-2009, 06:04 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

Lessee... a few trollish tidbits:

In my campaign, one of the more exotic forms of rations were "daka-meat", which was a plug of troll flesh in a can.

Needs moar daka!

10-27-2009, 06:40 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Registered only link dude.

What, really? Wow, that is *super dumb*. Does this work?

Spoiler: gnaw gnaw gnaw

10-27-2009, 06:50 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

What, really? Wow, that is *super dumb*. Does this work?

Spoiler: gnaw gnaw gnaw

Nope, tinypic it is.

10-27-2009, 07:07 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**
Nope, tinypic it is.

Grr! Tinypic it is.

10-27-2009, 07:15 AM

Brandi

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
I can understand the ettin, since they're both giant(-ish) creatures, but why would a troll fancy an invisible stalker? Heck, how would it even find one?

Who said the troll was the father?

I'm figuring it was an extremely obnoxious, yet successful, forced breeding experiment with neither partner enjoying it.

10-27-2009, 09:32 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**
What, really? Wow, that is *super dumb*.

Wizards pulled all their image galleries behind the subscriber wall when they did the site redesign. Seems counter-productive to me.

10-27-2009, 09:57 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**
Wizards pulled all their image galleries behind the subscriber wall when they did the site redesign. Seems counter-productive to me.

I knew they did *that* (stupid, *stupid* move that it was), but pulling the actual images as well? That's gonna break a lot of stuff. Well, anyway.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Trolls are one of my absolute favourite monsters, and I'd be surprised if any other D&D players said different. There's something elegantly simple about them - all they are is a big, stupid, powerful humanoid that can regenerate - and yet genuinely compelling: a relentless carnivore that knows no fear and wants only to eat. Flee for your lives! etc. etc. There's also something iconic and indisputably D&D about a quest to chase off a troll from its den, isn't there? [...]

Anyway, while I love the troll-under-the-bridge as much as the next man, I'm also a fan of trolls in unexpected settings. The troll innkeeper. The king with a troll bodyguard. The troll gaoler. The troll archmage. The troll ship's captain. And so on. Something that makes the characters suspicious and leery. Although you can only use that routine once or twice before it becomes old.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

They're one of my favourites too. However, I like more variety in trolls: Some trolls are intelligent, talking creatures and can be negotiated with, although most are none-to-smart and easily deceived, they can be very sneaky and a few are terrifyingly cunning, other trolls are irrational beasts, nothing but raging appetite in scaly humanoid form. Some are hulking giants, some are tiny creatures that sneak into peasant's cottages to steal their babies. Further, I'd rather trolls have a wider range of powers apart from the standard regeneration - some have skin as hard as diamond, rendering them practically immune to weapons, some have blood so corrosive it dissolves anything (or, if you're unlucky, anyone) who wounds them, some are so hideous the sight of them paralyses whoever sees them with disgust and dread, et cetera et cetera.

These things, very much. I love trolls myself, and always have. I've only once had the opportunity to use any, though: several robin's-egg blue troll-kin assassins. They were the underlings of a waterfall spirit who had learned some witchcraft; unfortunately this made her valuable as a slave to the conquistador who first explored the area, which in turn made *him* a figure of some renown.

Oh, also: I believe it was *Three Hearts and Three Lions* specifically which gave D&D its troll as a perpetually hungry, long-nosed, toothy gray-green monster. I'll see if I can dig it out, quote the relevant passage...

10-27-2009, 06:34 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I can understand the ettin, since they're both giant(-ish) creatures, but why would a troll fancy an invisible stalker? Heck, how would it even find one?

After checking the Invisible Stalker's Monster Manual entry it looks like the Crazy Wizard Did It explanation is the most likely one, since "Those encountered on the Prime Material plane have almost always been summoned by wizards to fulfill a specific task".

So somewhere in the AD&D universe there are wizards summoning up aerial spirits just to order them to have carnal relations with trolls.:eek:

Hmm, if they do it to trolls then said mad magi probably send them out to molest other creatures too. Is it part of a scheme to create an army of invisible half-breeds or are the crazy wizards just a bunch of voyeurs?

Or it could just be the Stalker had a misunderstanding of its orders, of the "I told you to *slay* the troll" variety. Perhaps there's only one Invisible Stalker, who due to his exceptionally badly worded (or exceptionally perverse) orders is roaming the land, forcing himself onto any vaguely humanoid female it comes across.

Not sure whether I'd want to put such speculations to use in a game, how many players would want to experience such a dubious scenario as The Adventurer of the Phantom Ravisher?

10-27-2009, 06:46 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Brandi**

Who said the troll was the father?

I'm figuring it was an extremely obnoxious, yet successful, forced breeding experiment with neither partner enjoying it.

I don't recall saying it was a *male* troll doing the fancying.:)

Actually, in my campaign the female troll is usually the nastier of the two sexes, so they usually are the dominant figure in a troll mating. The female trolls are not necessarily physically stronger than the males, although some are stronger most are about as large & muscular as the males, they mostly are just smarter and have more forceful personalities.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssius**

Oh, also: I believe it was *Three Hearts and Three Lions* specifically which gave D&D its troll as a perpetually hungry, long-nosed, toothy gray-green monster. I'll see if I can dig it out, quote the relevant passage...

Dang it, I was going to mention the classic D&D trolls origins in **that Poul Anderson story**, but never got around to it.

10-27-2009, 07:35 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The Dragon article in 199 has a troll dog. I wonder why there never was any troll fish, birds, insects or dragons? With 3e templates it would be easy (I expect fairly common for those DMs who used templates). But why not for 2e?

10-27-2009, 07:40 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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This is going to sound crass, but if the male pornstar is invisible that makes certain kind of porn easier to film...

10-28-2009, 12:13 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The Dragon article in 199 has a troll dog. I wonder why there never was any troll fish, birds, insects or dragons? With 3e templates it would be easy (I expect fairly common for those DMs who used templates). But why not for 2e?

Lack of creativity perhaps. It's a nice idea.

10-28-2009, 01:57 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The Dragon article in 199 has a troll dog. I wonder why there never was any troll fish, birds, insects or dragons? With 3e templates it would be easy (I expect fairly common for those DMs who used templates). But why not for 2e?

Well most likely it never occurred to them. As to why it didn't, who knows?

Although that reminds me, I once wrote up stats for a spider troll - a mixture of a troll, a giant spider and a drow elf. I wonder where I left it?

10-28-2009, 02:04 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sim_james**

This is going to sound crass, but if the male pornstar is invisible that makes certain kind of porn easier to film...

I'll bow to your superior insight into the subject.;

Besides, the wizard would probably have a *gem of seeing* or an appropriate spell to use if/when they want to view all the action. :o

10-31-2009, 11:14 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Umber Hulk

Well well, if it isn't another icon. Maybe not as iconic as the troll, but certainly one of those D&D stalwarts that we all know and love. When you think about it it's also a really *obvious* monster - indeed you could say that's rather odd that there aren't more creatures which burrow around underground and ambush dungeoneers.

In the Umber Hulk entry we see the idea of a "dungeon ecology" made explicit:

Quote:

Umber hulks dwell in the depths of the earth. They raid dungeons for food, much the way anteaters raid ant colonies, eating their fill and then moving on to let the "colony" recover.

Which is fun, especially since it implies that the world is so full of dungeons, and its dungeons so reliably full of meat, that it is possible for Umber Hulks to move around on a peripatetic basis, never running out of food. What a weird idea D&D is when you really think about it.

Anyway, the main plot hook in the entry is I suppose the idea of the underground Umber Hulk city, which, okay, is mildly interesting but doesn't grab me. Why do creatures like Umber Hulks always have to live in cities? If anything I imagine them congregating in some sort of giant nest, perhaps with a gargantuan queen right in the middle.

Vodyanoi

Vodyanoi are aquatic versions of the Umber Hulk - there are freshwater varieties and also rumoured saltwater ones which are greatly bigger. A so-so monster; I like the idea of Vodyanoi in their original mythological form as a kind of sinister old man floating around on a half-sunk log and dragging people to their deaths underwater. A shame that such a nice concept was thrown out in favour of something as bland as "water dwelling Umber Hulk".

10-31-2009, 11:42 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

According to the vodyanoi entry, the aquatic umber hulks (who aren't umber, but that's another matter) lack the ability to confuse opponents because they only have two eyes. Which implies that the standard umber hulk's *confusion* ability comes from the fact that it does have multiple eyes. Or that only certain eyes on its face do the confusing and the rest are for, you know, seeing and stuff.

We have a trio of Umber Hulks as sidekicks in our Spelljammer game, who are alternately named Huey, Duey and Louie or Janet, Louise and... something else. No one knows what gender the hulks are, nor does anyone want to find out, so we switch back and forth when referring to them. (We got them as followers by killing their neogi master, of course.)

11-01-2009, 12:38 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Umber Hulk

Anyway, the main plot hook in the entry is I suppose the idea of the underground Umber Hulk city, which, okay, is mildly interesting but doesn't grab me. Why do creatures like Umber Hulks always have to live in cities? If anything I imagine them congregating in some sort of giant nest, perhaps with a gargantuan queen right in the middle.

I don't see anything in the description which implies an umber hulk "City" is anything like a humanoid one, there's nothing to prevent it resembling a giant insect colony.

I prefer to think of Umber Hulks as lacking a queen though, more like a **social spider** colony than a termite's mound.

I wonder how long it would take the local dungeons to recover enough for the Umber Hulks to feed off them again? Perhaps too long to continuously sustain an active colony of Umber Hulks that stays in one place. That suggests umber hulks are migratory, and once they're exhausted the dungeons around a City they move en masse to their next city and start raiding from there. They could have a circuit of cities linked with well-defined tunnels. Alternatively, they hibernate between feeding frenzies, or most of them hibernate and only the few that are awake at any one time go out hunting when they're not guarding the city. If some adventurers stumble across the City, maybe the guards release a signal that alerts the sleeping hulks, so in a turn or two the intruders face hundreds of outraged monsters!

11-01-2009, 01:31 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well most likely it never occurred to them. As to why it didn't, who knows?

Although that reminds me, I once wrote up stats for a spider troll - a mixture of a troll, a giant spider and a drow elf. I wonder where I left it?

I'm surprised we had so little about the Trolls, I'm sure there's a lot more interesting things to say about trolls in AD&D and elsewhere.

Looking through their Monstrous Manual entry in a bit more detail, I notice a couple of things:

Firstly, on Troll language:

Quote:

Trolls have no language of their own, using "trollspeak", a guttural mishmash of common, giant, goblin, orc, and hobgoblin. Trollspeak is highly transient and trolls from one area are only 25% likely to be able to communicate with trolls from another.

So, Trolls basically pick up bits and pieces of the speech of other humanoids, and their dialect is so variable over time and distance that they usually can't even understand each other. That suggests Trolls have social interactions with other races to learn their languages - unless they are able to pick up conversational skills from their dinner! There are a number of official AD&D adventures where a groups of Orcs, Giants or what-not have a few trolls allies or slaves they employ as shock troops, that could be one way they learn their "trollspeak".

Still, there's an inference that Trolls have little or no culture of their own, but just mimic that around them. I doubt it's because they're too stupid to build a society - there are plenty of low-intelligent humanoids in AD&D that have their own language and culture. Something else must be at work. Perhaps Trolls are very short lived,

their superfast metabolisms burning out in but a decade or so, so don't get enough experience to build their own social identity? Then again, perhaps their ability to perfectly heal injuries means they are effectively immortal.

There may be a simple explanation for Trolls cultural stagnation in the Habitat/Society section:

Quote:

"Leadership is only retained by combat, so fights for pack control are frequent. Often trolls rend each other limb from limb, but these battles are never fatal. Still, it is the custom of trolls to toss the loser's head a great distance from the fight scene, and frequently losers must sit and stew for a week until their new head grows in."

Even for a Troll, losing and regrowing your head may have consequences. Perhaps it causes a partial or total loss of memory and identity. Trolls may have little culture due to their tradition of decapitation.

Oh, and I noticed one little titbit in the Ice Troll entry: "Ice trolls that live in arctic regions often hunt remorhaz". It takes some gumption to attack a monster capable of doing 10-100 points heat damage when you take double damage from fire, can't regenerate the damage, *and have only 2 hit dice* - that's pretty well certain death if they touch the polar worm's back. Perhaps it's be a test of bravery performed by large groups of Ice Trolls as a "Rite of Trollhood"?

11-01-2009, 02:39 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

So, Trolls basically pick up bits and pieces of the speech of other humanoids, and their dialect is so variable over time and distance that they usually can't even understand each other. That suggests Trolls have social interactions with other races to learn their languages - unless they are able to pick up conversational skills from their dinner!

Actually, that's exactly what happens. Trolls are really composite creatures, and share aspects of every creature that they kill and eat. When a troll eats a person, it absorbs some of that person's strength, knowledge, personality and skill. (Troll culture, such as it is, is spread through cannibalism.) It has something to do with how the regeneration works.

Heck, why do trolls regenerate?

One possible answer:

Trolls were once a peaceful race, who begged of the local faerie queen for a boon. They wished that they could be immortal, like the fey creatures that served the queen. Annoyed by the proto-trolls and their begging, the queen granted their request, though not as expected. Now any time a troll eats a once living thing, that creature's life force is preserved, and the troll takes on aspects of the creature it ate. Over time, the trolls became more bestial and animalistic from eating cows and boars and creatures of the forest. Realizing their error, they have begun eating other sentients and cannibalizing other trolls. This has only hurt their relationship with the humanoid races, as did the troll tribes that now try to eat the strongest, meanest, nastiest creatures they can find..

11-01-2009, 03:05 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Oh, and I noticed one little titbit in the Ice Troll entry: "Ice trolls that live in arctic regions often hunt remorhaz". It takes some gumption to attack a monster capable of doing 10-100 points heat damage when you take double damage from fire, can't regenerate the damage, *and have only 2 hit dice* - that's pretty well certain death if they touch the polar worm's back. Perhaps it's be a test of bravery performed by large groups of Ice Trolls as a "Rite of Trollhood"?

Or maybe they just act smart, like those primitive 0-level humanoids who wiped out the mammoths, ten millennia ago. Digging pits along their migration paths, using fire or loud noise to stampede them off cliffs or into ravines, ambushing them from unclimbable heights with volley after volley of spears or arrows, culling the young or the infirm elderly or the injured....

Our ancestors weren't 10th level combat machines. They were Tucker's kobolds.

11-01-2009, 03:56 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Anyway, the main plot hook in the entry is I suppose the idea of the underground Umber Hulk city, which, okay, is mildly interesting but doesn't grab me. Why do creatures like Umber Hulks always have to live in cities? If anything I imagine them congregating in some sort of giant nest, perhaps with a gargantuan queen right in the middle.

Whereas I read that bit about umber hulk cities and think, "oh, thank god. It's not yet another giant insect monster with a eusocial system". Why does every insect monster society need a queen? Everyone's got different tastes, but I think the city is much more interesting.

Why? Well, why do humans build cities? To trade and for defense. What are the umber hulks trading in? What hideous thing do they need to defend themselves against? Purple worms, perhaps? The worms are blind, so they're immune to the confusing gaze of the umber hulks. And they're big enough to swallow even an umber hulk whole.

Or perhaps it's the neogi. Maybe umber hulks were once brutal, bestial things from some far-off world, and the neogi uplifted and enslaved the lot of them. The umber hulks we know today are therefore escapees, or the descendants of same, clustered together in numbers for the days when the Eel-Men will descend from the sky and scour the earth to claim their inheritance. The solitary, wandering-monster type umber hulk is perhaps one that cracked under the constant state of paranoia and fear these hulk cities operate on, or perhaps a recent escapee trying to find the right underground railroad to take him to Freedom Town.

11-01-2009, 05:37 AM

YojimboC

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

While I have always liked the terrible regenerating monstrosity that is the D&D troll, I've also always had a soft spot for the "traditional" mountain spirit troll. The one that hides in caves during the day because the light of the sun turns them to stone.

I read D'Aulaires' *Book of Trolls* at an early age and really enjoyed it. Trollhags, multi-headed trolls, jewels, hulderfolk, etc. Lots of good stuff.

Anyway, given how indestructible trolls tend to be in D&D, I think having a "turn to stone" mechanic might help keep them in check.

11-01-2009, 06:29 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Trolls may speak a pigin (or creole?) of many local languages because those were the languages they spoke *before they became trolls*. If their origins are something like as was suggested in the Tarasque thread, then you're not born a troll, you become one.

Either that, or the local billy goats speak a local pigin dialect, and the trolls have learnt from them.

And it seems like killing a remorhaz would be easy -- get them flipped over on their backs above frozen water. They'll melt through the ice... and then boil *themselves*. Dinner is served, without the need to invent fire, even. Since most remorhaz art shows them rearing waaaay up, it's probably not even that hard to knock them over on their back.

Also, weirdly, I could never tell what color umber hulks were -- I'm partially colorblind, and most browns and greens look sort-of muddy brown-green to me. Unless it's a really bright green, it's *all* the same to me. Since umber hulk art direction was always kind of pointless to me, I went with the interpretation that *umber* hulk referred to their *habitat* -- clay earth.

11-01-2009, 06:13 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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Our ancestors weren't 10th level combat machines. They were Tucker's kobolds.

How dare you! My ancestors were all *at least* 12th level.:mad:;)

Ahem

Yes, it would presumably require a large and well-organized group of Ice Trolls to take down a Remorhaz whatever ploy they use. Although the physiology and behaviour of the Remorhaz is nothing like a mammoth, so I'd presume they'd require very different hunting tactics.

The other problem is they're very rare, so why mention them as being a standard prey instead of, say, seals or caribou?

Hmm, maybe we're getting this backwards. Perhaps Ice Trolls live together with *domesticated* Remorhaz's. According to their MM entry Remorhaz "can be trained to be excellent guards", so perhaps many Ice Troll communities are built around a "tame" polar worm, raised from an egg to guard their lair and obey the Chief and Shaman? Such a creature would be far easier for them to kill when it got old and feeble, or if starvation hits the tribe. There's an additional advantage: Ice Trolls only regenerates when in liquid water, how do they find a pool of water when the weather's 30 below? It's easy when you've got a pet Remorhaz which does 10-100 fire damage.

I like that idea, I can imagine Ice Trolls revering the Polar Worm as their totem animal, like our ancestors may have honoured the Cave Bear or the Mammoth.

11-01-2009, 06:27 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

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I agree with you there. It'd be far more interesting to have umber hulk cities built of individuals with a culture, skills and trade all of its own rather than another personality-less bunch of "obey the Queen" workers and drones. What crafts and arts would UMBER HULK practice? Do they have any peaceful dealings with other races or even other Hulk cities?

Good point about the neogi, we should have considered them earlier. Although maybe the relationship is more complicated than that. Perhaps the UMBER HULK cities work with the Neogi, and sell their excess population to Neogi slave-traders in return for vitally needed materials, or the cities are ruled by Neogi and the true UMBER HULK culture is based on small family bands?

Now I'm imagining Hulk Cities as underground space ports. In the centre of each is a huge magical Gateway, through which the spelljamming ships of the Neogi and other strange alien species such as Illithids can fly, paying hefty docking fees to the City's secretive Council of the Four Eyes and having their cargoes shifted by the unionised Hulk longshoremen.

11-01-2009, 06:35 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **YojimboC**

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Anyway, given how indestructible trolls tend to be in D&D, I think having a "turn to stone" mechanic might help keep them in check.

Dang it, I was going to mention some of those in my "I like trolls with alternate powers / traits" post earlier, especially the classic turn-to-stone bit.

Anyway, I share your liking for alternative takes on the Troll, especially troll-hags and the polycephalic variety.

11-01-2009, 07:45 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The other problem is they're very rare, so why mention them as being a standard prey instead of, say, seals or caribou?.

Inuit whaling villages only kill a bowhead or two a season, but the size of the whale makes it a significant part of their entire diet. Plus, they like the taste. The act of hunting, killing, and preparing the whale is laden with rituals, making it a central part of their spiritual life.

No ice troll coming of age ritual is complete, without participating a remorhaz hunt. Successful hunters hold positions of high esteem. The chitin is boiled down into a draught, and the resultant gel reinforces the ice in their bodies, enabling tribes to survive warm summers. The flesh is a delicacy. The scythe-like legs are used for scraping the hides of seals and caribou. The lenses of the eyes and purest blue scales on the belly are carved into jewelry. The intestines are cut into segments and tied around coals, insulating them from the cold. The thyrn is used for old ice sculpting and ritual branding, and is sold to southern races for alcohol and steel. Frost giant reavers riding their boats made of hollow-out and mummified white dragons never seem to raid villages where a remorhaz head is mounted on sticks, in a conspicuous position.

11-01-2009, 09:13 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I think that the repercussions of Umber Hulk cities are more interesting than why they exist. Umber Hulks raid dungeons for food. To feed an entire city, one needs a lot of food. Maybe Umber Hulks build dungeons as farms for their cities. Maybe they've got huge scrolls listing all the dungeons in the world, with ratings as to how good they are as restaurants:

"Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl: Good eating; 'ware the dragon.
Tomb of Horrors: Worst stop ever - little to eat, highly dangerous"

Capturing something like that and finding a sage to decipher it could be the holy grail of adventuring.

Speking of which, how do Umber Hulks communicate with one another? Do they have their own language?

11-01-2009, 10:52 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

Trolls may speak a pigin (or creole?) of many local languages because those were the languages they spoke *before they became trolls*. If their origins are something like as was suggested in the Tarasque thread, then you're not born a troll, you become one.

Oh, that language thing is *inspiring*. If I could fake a Cajun accent, all my trolls would speak like that now! That's even better than Scottish dwarves!

11-02-2009, 06:58 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I think that the repercussions of Umber Hulk cities are more interesting than why they exist. Umber Hulks raid dungeons for food. To feed an entire city, one needs a lot of food. Maybe Umber Hulks build dungeons as farms for their cities. Maybe they've got huge scrolls listing all the dungeons in the world, with ratings as to how good they are as restaurants:

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Capturing something like that and finding a sage to decipher it could be the holy grail of adventuring.

Speking of which, how do Umber Hulks communicate with one another? Do they have their own language?

Oh I like the idea of an Umber Hulk Dungeon Restaurant critic.

As for the question of languages, this is 2nd edition AD&D we're talking about, were *Elven Cats* have their own language, so I'd have thought a race of sapient human-level intelligent creatures would be bound to have a language of their own.

Although that's not to say it's a spoken, or at least audible language.

Maybe they have subsonic voices, way too low for humans to hear, but ideal for speaking through vast thicknesses of rock.

Or perhaps they speak by telepathic-projection via their inner eyes. That *confusion* humanoids experience on meeting their gaze is just a useful byproduct of their normal means of communication, caused by the great differences in their neural architecture.

11-02-2009, 07:16 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Inuit whaling villages only kill a bowhead or two a season, but the size of the whale makes it a significant part of their entire diet. Plus, they like the taste. The act of hunting, killing, and preparing the whale is laden with rituals, making it a central part of their spiritual life.

Yes but whales are a relatively common* and abundant species compared to a Remorhaz, and they have the abundance of the seas to feed upon. Remorhaz live off the notoriously lifeless arctic wastes and have a very hot metabolism, implying they need immensely large ranges to keep them fed. I just doubt there's enough of them be make up the bulk of a race's diet, unless the race in question is itself very rare and mainly lairs next to a Remorhaz's lair (as in my "domesticated Remorhaz proposal").

It's more likely Ice Trolls view Remorhaz as a totem animal that is only rarely seen, and such occasions are viewed as significant omens, and is killed extraordinarily rarely.

*It says so right in the Monstrous Manual's Common Whale entry - "Frequency: Common".;)

11-02-2009, 08:33 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

As for the question of languages, this is 2nd edition AD&D we're talking about, were *Elven Cats* have their own language, so I'd have thought a race of sapient human-level intelligent creatures would be bound to have a language of their own.

Although that's not to say it's a spoken, or at least audible language.

Maybe they have subsonic voices, way too low for humans to hear, but ideal for speaking through vast thicknesses of rock.

Or perhaps they speak by telepathic-projection via their inner eyes. That *confusion* humanoids experience on meeting their gaze is just a useful byproduct of their normal means of communication, caused by the great differences in their neural architecture.

I was thinking telepathic, but looking back at the entry, it says that they have their own language. Now I have this idea of an adventurer who works with an Umber Hulk Chewbacca-style.

Also interesting is that Vodyanoi have an affinity for Electric Eels. I wonder what the connection is there.

11-02-2009, 07:37 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I was thinking telepathic, but looking back at the entry, it says that they have their own language. Now I have this idea of an adventurer who works with an Umber Hulk Chewbacca-style.

Also interesting is that Vodyanoi have an affinity for Electric Eels. I wonder what the connection is there.

Blast it, I looked in the Monstrous Manual and failed to register the "Umber hulks have their own language" at the end of the second paragraph, I must be going dotty.:(

Still, it doesn't say what form said language takes, and I like the idea of it using subsonics and/or confusion-gaze.

I vaguely remember reading an article somewhere about how Umber Hulks make great henchmen when you're down a dungeon (or was it a great creature to shapechange into?) - tough, intelligent and able to excavate tunnels at will.

The Vodyanoi's ability to summon electric eels is odd, it does suggest they live in similar habitats (swamps and sluggish rivers with so much sediment there's very little visibility - in South America!).

Hmm, now if AD&D Vodyanoi come from South America (rather than Russia like their name originates from), does that mean they have South American accents (Brazilian Vodyanoi?). No doubt the *Sea Caballeros* hire them on occasion to excavate ports, canals and other water-features.

11-02-2009, 11:39 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

*It says so right in the Monstrous Manual's Common Whale entry - "Frequency: Common".;)

That was before the whaling industry depleted their numbers.

Shame about the remorhaz. Once abundant, but nearly driven to extinction by the terrible tribes of ice trolls. Their giant remorhaz-processing sled, dragged by immense primordial beasts of the tundra, heads out every season to kill dozens of remorhaz for their meat and thyrn.

Fortunately, a middle aged and somewhat porcine hero (in the "0-level" sense) has split off from more conservative green-warmlands ecological groups, who are content to simply whine a lot in the courts of the southern kingdoms. He has formed the Snow Shepherds, who use fast dog sleds to chase the giant sledge and throw *potions of smelling really badly* on its deck in a quixotic attempt to spoil the slaughtered remohaz.

11-03-2009, 11:11 AM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Oh, that language thing is *inspiring*. If I could fake a Cajun accent, all my trolls would speak like that now! That's even better than Scottish dwarves!

Really, this hasn't come up yet? All I can say, mon, is...

<http://img39.yfrog.com/img39/7198/whujuthatyudu.jpg>

11-09-2009, 09:52 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Unicorn

Unicorns eh? Difficult to get away from their stereotypical association with princesses and fluffy cloud castles and daisy chains, isn't it? They're also, well... kind of boring really; I never understood the appeal of a white horse with a narhwal horn in its forehead.

There is something interesting in there about Unicorns being protectors of a forest who drive away evildoers, but there are a lot of other D&D beings who can fill that role in a much more interesting manner (witness Treants). The woodland protector shtick is done to death and without it a Unicorn is really just a goody-two-shoes with four legs.

Is there anything better that you can come up with?

[It should be noted that Unicorn horns go for 1,500 gps a pop, which is handy for the egg-hunter/animal body parts user campaign I will one day run.]

11-09-2009, 10:42 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

It does tie into something I said recently. Now that resurrected human corpses have been made into cute and fluffy friends (though I'm sure we'll discuss that more in a week or so,) we're running out of options for genuinely menacing supernatural threats. I'm of the opinion that humanizing demons is next, but going back to the well on previously bastardized monsters is up there as well. We'll know that route precisely the first time you see a unicorn on a mainstream show/movie/video game that eats someone who can't ride it. Or keep it as a gentle creature and have it be used for more serious reasons. Maybe an evil religious cult captures them and then goes from town to town, forcing people to ride them. If you're unmarried and the unicorn rejects you, the cult has you executed. Something like that, and it's especially tough if the unicorns don't know that their "kindly masters" are abusing their powers like that.

11-10-2009, 12:56 AM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hmm, I'd most likely use a Unicorn as a good-o-meter - if the paladin or ranger is beginning to act in a less than good fashion, I might have a unicorn run away from him or something like that. They can also work nicely as mounts for female characters, especially paladins or rangers.

And of course, there's the Unicorn Horn as cure-all bit.

But personally, I would prefer to use unicorns as less intelligent than the MM makes them out to be. I don't really like the idea of them being able to talk - I'd prefer to see them at elephant-esque intelligence.

And there's the bizarreness of their remarkable AC. Why is it so low?!

11-10-2009, 03:08 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

And there's the bizarreness of their remarkable AC. Why is it so low?!

Because the unicorn isn't a horse with a spike on its forehead.

The horn is the unicorn, not the horse. Perfectly white and smooth, almost shimmeringly pearlescent. It's not natural. It's not horn, or compressed hair, or bone. It's force. Pure force. The same stuff that magic missiles and invisible walls are made of. Slightly glowing with the energy, just enough to stand out against a dark backdrop of angry trees.

The rest of the beast is just an approximation of a horse. Planes of force, semi-spheres, whorls, other geometric shapes all combine to create the impression of a horse-like creature. But the horse-part is like the train of a wedding gown, gaudy and ornate sparkling bits that trail behind the main body, dragging on the floor -- or the greensward.

The unicorn isn't from around here. It's from outside this world. Far, far, outside. A place where sapient things aren't flesh and blood. Where they're made of light and pressure, color and shifting edges. They think differently, too. Care about things we can't understand, obsess about things that we don't worry about. That's why it's all up in arms about bizarre esoteria. Why virgins of all stripes get a friendly nuzzle. And not-virgins, no matter how it happened, get the vicious white blade across the neck.

It's not good, not really. The folklore built around it is like a pearl around a grain of sand. What it is, is alien. Strange. Incomprehensible. Prone to what appear to be random, violent acts because we can't suss out the true reason behind why it does what it does.

11-10-2009, 03:10 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Maybe an evil religious cult captures them and then goes from town to town, forcing people to ride them. If you're unmarried and the unicorn rejects you, the cult has you executed.

No, no, no. That's how the cult tells if you're a virgin, so that they can *use you as a human sacrifice*. Like all good evil bad guy rituals, it requires a virgin sacrifice. And how can you tell who is a virgin? Well, unicorns only let virgins ride them. So the cult kidnaps a unicorn and uses it as a test to make sure their sacrifice will be accepted by their dark god. (Plus, you know, perverting a creature of good's purity test toward evil ends is a hoot in its own right.)

Which is I guess like execution, but happens to the virgins instead of the impure.

11-10-2009, 03:15 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I'm pretty sure I've included more unicorn *parts* - skin, horns, and meat - in my games than living unicorns. Messing with a unicorn is good shorthand for "black hat." I would say, however, that I'd probably restrain myself in the future - having a unicornskin set of armor is basically as subtle as having humanskin. It's transparent that the intent is to be "this guy is a bad guy; he does outrageously bad things." And there's better ways to do that.

In an over-the-top fantasy setting, an all-maiden unicorn cavalry unit would be a pretty decent emblem of the kingdom of Lawful McGood, King and Patron of Good Adventurers.

11-10-2009, 03:41 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Five Eyes**

In an over-the-top fantasy setting, an all-maiden unicorn cavalry unit would be a pretty decent emblem of the kingdom of Lawful McGood, King and Patron of Good Adventurers.

"Kicked out of the unicorn cavalry because she had the temerity to sleep with the man she loves" isn't a bad background for a PC or NPC, either. Could be a sympathetic outsider exiled from her duty but still trying to do good. Or she could be a fallen paladin who turns to evil and works with succubi and incubi to destroy the king's magically powered cavalry.

11-10-2009, 03:49 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The Monstrous manual doesn't mention virgins at all, just requiring "a pure heart and good alignment". Which is whitewashing the whitewash, really.

Unicorns hate griffons, according to their entry, but I don't know how much mileage you can get from that; it's really just

based on the griffon liking to eat horses and horse-like things.

Maybe the best question to ask to make unicorns interesting is "why, in the setting, do unicorns only allow virgins to ride them?" (I'm ignoring the MM and sticking with the traditional virgin bit here.) That's an odd restriction, and probably leads to all sorts of awkward situations in the game world when a unicorn has bonded with a young lady but then leaves her when she finds a male of her actual species. Why would a creature of pure good abandon that nice lady?

11-10-2009, 04:23 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Maybe the best question to ask to make unicorns interesting is "why, in the setting, do unicorns only allow virgins to ride them?" (I'm ignoring the MM and sticking with the traditional virgin bit here.) That's an odd restriction, and probably leads to all sorts of awkward situations in the game world when a unicorn has bonded with a young lady but then leaves her when she finds a male of her actual species. Why would a creature of pure good abandon that nice lady?

Because bonding with an unicorn is a relationship as intense and full of love (not *that* kind, you pervs!) as any marriage between two soul-mates. But being as it is between beings as separate as humanoids and unicorns, it cannot last for ever. The unicorn and the maiden must eventually go their separate ways, in a sorrowful but amicable and mutually accepted separation.

(Alternatively, all unicorns are female, and just don't get along with men.)

11-10-2009, 04:24 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Maybe the best question to ask to make unicorns interesting is "why, in the setting, do unicorns only allow virgins to ride them?" (I'm ignoring the MM and sticking with the traditional virgin bit here.) That's an odd restriction, and probably leads to all sorts of awkward situations in the game world when a unicorn has bonded with a young lady but then leaves her when she finds a male of her actual species. Why would a creature of pure good abandon that nice lady?

The obvious answer is that the unicorn isn't recognizing women who are "pure" in the Christian sense, but women who have rejected the need for men. Earlier myths, like Artemis.

Because otherwise the unicorn cavalry would be populated with stereotypical male nerds who obsess about forges and spells -- and would probably take umbrage at being called "maidens".

11-10-2009, 05:06 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The obvious answer is that the unicorn isn't recognizing women who are "pure" in the Christian sense, but women who have rejected the need for men. Earlier myths, like Artemis.

Which is interesting, because it implies this harsher warrior-women ethic than the unicorn's goody-two-shoes reputation suggests.

11-10-2009, 05:39 AM

Brandi

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Because otherwise the unicorn cavalry would be populated with stereotypical male nerds who obsess about forges and spells -- and would probably take umbrage at being called "maidens".

Aside: "maiden" used to be a perfectly acceptable, non-perjorative way to describe a virgin man. Malory uses it in *Morte d'Arthur* when talking about Galahad and Percival.

11-10-2009, 06:44 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Unicorn

Is there anything better that you can come up with?

I killed a character in my Drow campaign back in the day when a Unicorn impaled them after they ran off alone into the woods.

Between the (generally) C/G Elves, Treants, Unicorns, etc., the forest is a scary dangerous place for an evil adventurer.

11-10-2009, 06:50 AM

Five Eyes

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Actually, yeah - most of the annoying "woodlands prankster" monsters always seem a bit like fluff material, but an evil party is in fact much safer in a dark, horrible crypt than they are in a sunlit forest.

Never thought of it that way.

11-10-2009, 11:12 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Because bonding with an unicorn is a relationship as intense and full of love (not *that* kind, you pervs!) as any marriage between two soul-mates. But being as it is between beings as separate as humanoids and unicorns, it cannot last for ever. The unicorn and the maiden must eventually go their separate ways, in a sorrowful but amicable and mutually accepted separation.

(Alternatively, all unicorns are female, and just don't get along with men.)

Well, if that latter one is the case, there is the obvious loophole that at least **SOMEONE** in the all-maiden unicorn cavalry should have thought of. Of course then that leads to questions about what "maiden" means in the fantasy sense, and so on from there. That might be a problem with the whole "virgin" thing in general. It's not whitewashing so much as the fact that if it comes up at all, suddenly the D&D campaign that was about impaling evil critters for loot veers directly into sex. Plenty of campaigns are fine with that, but not all of them are, and now we get questions about sex, potentially homosexuality, male versus female virginity, and even really tough subjects like rape.

Take the "virgin sacrifice" cult from the last page. Sure, a village could hire the usual adventuring party to take care of it, but if they don't have the time or money, well, there is the other obvious solution. And then it just gets more complex and worse from there.

11-11-2009, 02:48 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

It does tie into something I said recently. Now that resurrected human corpses have been made into cute and fluffy friends (though I'm sure we'll discuss that more in a week or so,) we're running out of options for genuinely menacing supernatural threats. I'm of the opinion that humanizing demons is next, but going back to the well on previously bastardized monsters is up there as well. We'll know that route precisely the first time you see a unicorn on a mainstream show/movie/video game that eats someone who can't ride it.

SNIP

It's only a matter of time, the idea of nasty unicorn's old hat in fiction and roleplaying. I could also stretch the definition and include the Unicorn Brood of RuneQuest's Dorastor supplement - it's best not to even think about what they do to captives, maiden or otherwise, and I recall at least two 1st edition AD&D takes on carnivorous "black unicorns" with a particular fondness for the flesh of maidens,

Still, I'd rather have evil unicorns be more than just brutal flesh-eaters. Maybe they still protect the forest and its inhabitants, but it's a more Mafiosa approach to "protection".

Dang it, now I'm imagining a herd of black unicorns ruled by a "Don Cornione", extorting goods and services out of the sapient forest-dwellers with "offers they can't refuse". Those who oppose them need not fear waking up with a horse's head in their bed, but rather a spiral horn in their back!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Which is interesting, because it implies this harsher warrior-women ethic than the unicorn's goody-two-shoes reputation suggests.

That's the RuneQuest take on Unicorn Riders of the Cult of Yelorna. They're man-hating warrior women to a lady. There's a scenario in the old **Big Rubble** box set where the players mount an raid on a Yelorna compound.

11-11-2009, 10:34 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Don Hornione, you mean?

11-11-2009, 11:13 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**
Don Hornione, you mean?

Nope, I meant Don Cornione.:)

The meaning of the pun's the same as Don Hornione, since Cornu is Latin for a horn.

Pseudo-Latin seemed appropriate for the name of a Mafia Unicorn **Capo**.

11-14-2009, 10:57 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Nope, I meant Don Cornione.:)

The meaning of the pun's the same as Don Hornione, since Cornu is Latin for a horn.

Pseudo-Latin seemed appropriate for the name of a Mafia Unicorn **Capo**.

Yeah, but translating puns from Latin sounded too subtle. I felt it be-hooved us to make the more obvious ones. :)

11-15-2009, 06:54 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Yeah, but translating puns from Latin sounded too subtle. I felt it be-hooved us to make the more obvious ones. :)

On the mane I enjoy a wide range of puns, from blatant to nigh-undetectable.

Besides, the Unicorn Capo is a modest fellow who doesn't like to toot his own horn. ;)

11-16-2009, 12:38 PM

Capellan

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

One of Clockwork Golem Workshop's pdfs has an idea of people who have had troll blood end up in their wounds

I've been reading through these five threads over the last few weeks, and geeking over all the references to Fighting Fantasy (of which I have a full set, thanks to many hours and many dollars on eBay), but seeing a reference to one of my PDFs is an even bigger 'geek moment' :)

I do prefer *Dragon Warriors* version of the troll, though I can see why that scene from *Three Hearts and Three Lions* had such an impact on how the monster is envisaged in D&D - it's a very cool sequence.

11-16-2009, 02:11 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Capellan**

I do prefer *Dragon Warriors* version of the troll, though I can see why that scene from *Three Hearts and Three Lions* had such an impact on how the monster is envisaged in D&D - it's a very cool sequence.

Yeah. I've used DW as my main RPG for several decades, and the 'tall, gaunt creature of morbid character' is good, creepy and loathsome. Trouble is, to use most D&D stuff, I have to use Ogres instead, as behaviour such as gibbering and capering madly along a desolate marsh while sucking down raw eels doesn't allow for much character building or roleplaying...

Also Re the Unicorn. I've always seen them as fey - hard, dark, dangerous and unpredictable. Arrives to save the villagers from a goblin attack, and then runs the fairest maiden through with its horn before departing.

I like the idea (heard somewhere, probably pre-internet days) that a unicorn has to drench its horn in the blood of a dying maiden to keep its powers for another year. Their dark, hidden secret... If the PC's find out, then hit squads of woodlands creatures will try to silence them, forever.

11-17-2009, 12:02 AM

Gen. Lee

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Because bonding with an unicorn is a relationship as intense and full of love (not *that* kind, you pervs!) as any marriage between two soul-mates. But being as it is between beings as separate as humanoids and unicorns, it cannot last for ever. The unicorn and the maiden must eventually go their separate ways, in a sorrowful but amicable and mutually accepted separation.

See, this is the kind of thing I was ready to run once. The party had a female paladin, whose player enjoyed flirtatious talk. My plan was to have the unicorn show up and offer to help her take down the BBEG, BUT she had to swear off guys for the duration of their partnership. As a near-immortal critter, the unicorn had seen how fickle humans could be-- he/she needed total concentration on the task, so no fooling around! I was going to play the unicorn as a drill-instructor/fairy godmother-in-law personality, while generating tension of the can't-have-it kind.

And the player left the game (Real Life complications) before I could even get started. :(

11-17-2009, 06:26 AM

Red_Rob

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

... hit squads of woodlands creatures...

Wow, that is one amazing concept! I'm getting images of Thumper from Bambi directing hordes of Kamikaze bluebirds to divebomb the Mage while the Fighter is dragged down by a wave of squirrels!

Its like a Disney version of Alfred Hitchcock's The Birds!

11-17-2009, 06:41 AM

Capellan

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Yeah. I've used DW as my main RPG for several decades, and the 'tall, gaunt creature of morbid character' is good, creepy and loathsome. Trouble is, to use most D&D stuff, I have to use Ogres instead, as behaviour such as gibbering and capering madly along a desolate marsh while sucking down raw eels doesn't allow for much character building or roleplaying...

I don't really agree. There's enough wriggle room in the 'crazed swampdweller' schtick for some creepy fun ... such as the loathsome, stinking beast that occasionally speaks beautiful fragments of poetry, or the babbling, savant-like troll oracle, and so on. But then when it comes to DW in general, I tend to think "how could this monster be used in an Arthurian legend" and let that guide my thoughts.

D&D trolls, on the other hand, I've always found tiresome to fight (especially in earlier editions where regeneration was more effective). The creepiness of the regen was never portrayed in an interesting mechanical way, and the fluff text wasn't all that exciting. Hence writing PDFs which were intended to make them more

interesting/dynamic in play.

As far as Unicorns go, I find they're a bit twee unless you subvert them somehow. For instance, if you keep the 'maiden' concept, then your unicorn riders are likely to be a pretty grim bunch, avoiding personal contact with other humanoids in order to prevent emotional/romantic entanglements. Such riders might even be raised from birth, in tough, Spartan-like discipline.

11-18-2009, 02:15 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Capellan**

I don't really agree. There's enough wriggle room in the 'crazed swampdweller' schtick for some creepy fun ... such as the loathsome, stinking beast that occasionally speaks beautiful fragments of poetry, or the babbling, savant-like troll oracle, and so on. But then when it comes to DW in general, I tend to think "how could this monster be used in an Arthurian legend" and let that guide my thoughts.

Each to their own with pseudo Arthurian legend, although I don't remember Galahad having to dodge Shadowbolts, either.

My issue with Trolls is more in 3rd Ed adventures, where they are more likely to be running hostels or be slightly disturbing common folk in city contexts, rather than the gibbering madman, etc.

I do like the creepy fun idea. I've got an old Dungeon mag with an adventure that involves a princess type falling in love with a beautiful singer from the nearby fens, rather than the boring merchant's son. Turns out when she elopes, singer is an outcast, artistic, sensitive troll. Trouble with said adventure is that then the PCs are supposed to kill the troll and marry the princess to the merchant.

And they said D&D doesn't set good role models for kids...

11-22-2009, 08:07 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Urchin

Yes, a sea urchin. I had totally forgotten about this entry and was surprised to discover it again; not really a shock, though, is it? I mean...sea urchins.

D&D urchins are not like real world ones, though. They can fire poison spines, for one thing, and also possess an innate clairvoyant ability which they employ through means of an "organ gem" each carries inside its body. The enterprising DM could certainly do something with that - urchin-gem-powered psionic devices, anyone?

There are a couple of varieties of urchin, but apart from the Land Urchin none of them are detailed in any way except for stat blocks. Thus the DM isn't told what kind of poison the different varieties possess, how potent it is, etc. etc. I can't work out if this is deliberate (empower DM creativity!), lazy, or incompetent (they just forgot). Anyway, it strikes me as a nice thread project. So have at it! What kind of poisons would the **black**, **green**, **red**, **silver**, and **yellow** urchins have?

11-22-2009, 09:05 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

There are a couple of varieties of urchin, but apart from the Land Urchin none of them are detailed in any way except for stat blocks. Thus the DM isn't told what kind of poison the different varieties possess, how potent it is, etc. etc. I can't work out if this is deliberate (empower DM creativity!), lazy, or incompetent (they just forgot). Anyway, it strikes me as a nice thread project. So have at it! What kind of poisons would the **black**, **green**, **red**, **silver**, and **yellow** urchins have?

Elemental-themed urchin death!

Black: Means death! The rotting disease. It's not leprosy, it's not the black plague. You just wish it was. Your skin starts to rot and peel away in long blackened strips, like well-charred ribs on the grill. Your peeling skin kind of looks like black bandages, so you might be mistaken for a dark mummy. Well, except for oozing pus that constantly drips out from underneath the crunch bits of epidermis.

Save vs. Death or take 1d6 points of damage per day. Charisma is reduced to -3, and all saves against disease are penalized by 6 points since you've lost protective barrier provided by the skin. All effects are permanent, barring a wish or divine intervention.

Green: Means liquid! The organs within your body dissolve into a rather disgusting slurry (save vs. Death at -4 or die within 1d6 turns). During the last turn, you're completely incapacitated as you constantly vomit up blood and half-dissolved bodily organs.

Red: Fire! Or to be more specific, spontaneous humanoid combustion. 1d6 days after exposure, there is a 40% chance of being affected. If affected, make a saving throw vs. Death. A successful save means your skin just bubbles and blisters in a few inconvenient spots (3d6 damage), failure means you take 3d6 damage per round, until dead. While dying (and for 3d10 rounds after death) your body emits light equivalent to that of a torch. If you roll a natural 1 on the save, you explode violently in a burst of flaming-hot humanoid meat and bone shards. You die immediately, and everyone within 30 ft. takes 1d6 points of damage per character level.

Silver: Brr. Blood flows away from the extremities as the poison mimics the symptoms of hypothermia. On a failed save, become *feeble-minded*. Take 1d6 points of cold damage per turn unless snugly wrapped in a blanket. You're too stupid to do this yourself. If you take a total of more than 6 points damage, roll 3d6 on Table 13-17-9: Minor Body Part Loss to see which body part is lost from frostbite and gangrene:

Table 13-17-9: Minor Body Part Loss Table

3 Head
4 Both arms and legs
5 Both legs
6 Both arms
7 One leg (roll randomly)
8 One arm (roll randomly)
9 1d10 fingers
10 1d10 toes
11+ Nothing

There is a 20% chance of recovering fully (except for the lost body parts) every turn you are warmly blanketed. Improvised blankets (slicing open the belly of a recently slain red dragon, snuggling up with random naked party members, etc.) have an 80% chance of working.

Yellow: Save vs. polymorph or turn a bright yellow. Really bright yellow. Light radius of 120 ft. This is permanent. From now on, you require triple the normal food rations to sustain this output of energy, and any clothing you wear has to make a save vs. fire every day or smolder and fall apart.

11-23-2009, 01:36 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

[U][SIZE="5"]So have at it! What kind of poisons would the **black, green, red, silver,**
and **yellow** urchins have?

I'd probably take the easy way out and just borrow the breath weapons from the Dragons of the same colour.
I'm really not sure it would ever come up in all but the oddest campaigns.

11-23-2009, 02:54 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I'm disappointed there wasn't a variant of Land Urchin, called Street Urchin, with pickpocket skill...

11-23-2009, 04:38 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The urchins don't have poison, in the conventional sense. The substance they inject into their prey is actually a psionically charged jelly. This same jelly is what crystalizes inside the urchin into their clairvoyance granting gem. When the jelly is injected into another creature, the subject is overcome with psionic forces. Land urchins paralyze their foes by shutting down the foe's ability to move psychically, but other types of urchins can cause strong hallucinations, mental dominance by the urchin or a variety of other psionic effects. One species was found to be surprisingly intelligent and able to communicate telepathically with injected subjects.

One common feature of the urchins is that their clairvoyant ability is not actually very accurate. They can sense the presence of other beings, but have difficulty telling where these creatures are in relation to the urchin itself. Until, that is, the urchin "poison"s a subject. At that point the psionic nature of the jelly allows the urchin to perfectly locate the dosed subject, and see through the subject's eyes. At which point the urchin's accuracy with their darts increases significantly.

11-23-2009, 04:42 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Before we move on too much, I thought of something I wanted to ask about trolls: WHY do they regenerate? Not, that is, why in character do they regenerate. Rather, where did the idea of fast healing trolls come from. You see it in a lot of fiction now (it's in *Willow* as I recall) but is that original to D&D, or did Gygax steal that from some legend or fantasy novel I'm unfamiliar with?

11-23-2009, 05:01 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Before we move on too much, I thought of something I wanted to ask about trolls: WHY do they regenerate? Not, that is, why in character do they regenerate. Rather, where did the idea of fast healing trolls come from. You see it in a lot of fiction now (it's in *Willow* as I recall) but is that original to D&D, or did Gygax steal that from some legend or fantasy novel I'm unfamiliar with?

Tall, thin, green, rubbery, regenerating, fire-fearing... all come from Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. One of Gygax's more blatant homages.

11-23-2009, 05:08 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Tall, thin, green, rubbery, regenerating, fire-fearing... all come from Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. One of Gygax's more blatant homages.

Gnomes, the D&D paladin and the old Law-vs.-Chaos take on the alignment also come from that book, IIRC. (D&D's Law-vs.-Chaos doesn't really resemble Moorcock's, except in name only...)

11-23-2009, 08:09 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The colored urchins are from the FF and the land urchin from the MM II. They aren't my favorite echinoderm (those are crinoids) but they do have some potential. The land urchins are much better protected than other herbivores of their size and could easily mow down farms and forests. Farmers could easily kill a few but if the population has a boom, for every one slain by an arrow or sling stone, there are 10 more that try to poison the farmer. That they have "pearls" and thus people hunting them doesn't help that much with the numbers they can produce.

I don't remember much about the colored urchins and my copy of the FF is buried at the moment.

11-23-2009, 11:02 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Elemental-themed urchin death!

Those are...a bit tough for their xp. :) The "kills you worse than the plague" urchin is worth a quarter of a lousy ogre. Personally, I'd stick all but one of them in the underused "four humors" category. The red, for example, might make you giddily happy, unable to attack anything and prone to charge at the nearest thing for hugs. That the nearest thing is an irate beholder, or even the spiky urchin itself, is not noticed until later!

Or just rip off Superman's kryptonite. The green would be rough, but imagine how entertaining the red would be?

11-24-2009, 02:59 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Tall, thin, green, rubbery, regenerating, fire-fearing... all come from Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*. One of Gygax's more blatant homages.

That would have been my guess, but I thought it was worth asking. I should probably get around to reading that sometime.

11-24-2009, 03:54 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Those are...a bit tough for their xp. :) The "kills you worse than the plague" urchin is worth a quarter of a lousy ogre.

That's okay. It's not like the XP you get from killing monsters is actually worth anything. After all, the average fighter needs to kill 134 orcs just to make second level. Anybody who makes it to 3rd level is obviously in an out of control monty haul campaign and needs to die. :)

11-25-2009, 12:12 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Urchin

Yes, a sea urchin. I had totally forgotten about this entry and was surprised to discover it again; not really a shock, though, is it? I mean...sea urchins.

D&D urchins are not like real world ones, though. They can fire poison spines, for one thing, and also possess an innate clairvoyant ability which they employ through means of an "organ gem" each carries inside its body. The enterprising DM could certainly do something with that - urchin-gem-powered psionic devices, anyone?

There are a couple of varieties of urchin, but apart from the Land Urchin none of them are detailed in any way except for stat blocks. Thus the DM isn't told what kind of poison the different varieties possess, how potent it is, etc. etc. I can't work out if this is deliberate (empower DM creativity!), lazy, or incompetent (they just forgot). Anyway, it strikes me as a nice thread project. So have at it! What kind of poisons would the **black**, **green**, **red**, **silver**, and **yellow** urchins have?

As DMH already said, the Urchins poison was detailed when they originally debuted in the original Fiend Folio, I guess they must have cut it out of the Monstrous Manual for space.

I'm a bit puzzled as to why the editors of the 2nd edition MM thought they were worth inclusion - they're a pretty dull monster when you get down to it, and there must be a lot of worthier contenders for the vacancy. Certainly, I only ever use the D&D Urchins once, and that was mainly 'cause I'd just got the Fiend Folio and used the Random Encounter Table a couple of times to add a dash of randomness to one of my scenarios.

Anyhow, it occurs to me that some enterprising character would try to farm urchins. Being scavengers, they probably eat any old rubbish, and the gems in them are worth up to 2500 gp. Of course, you've got that venomous spine-shooting problem when it comes to actually getting at those gemstones. I'm thinking a sufficiently ruthless AD&D entrepreneur would keep them in paddocks half-full of salt water, and then just drain the pool dry and wait for them to perish of dehydration when it comes times to harvest them.

11-25-2009, 02:57 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Anyhow, it occurs to me that some enterprising character would try to farm urchins. Being scavengers, they probably eat any old rubbish, and the gems in them are worth up to 2500 gp. Of course, you've got that venomous spine-shooting problem

Well, for the silver urchin (the one whose gem is worth up to 2500 gp), the poison causes catatonia for 1 to 3 days, according to the Fiend Folio. Which is a bonus, not a disadvantage. Farm the urchins for their poison, then harvest the gems when they die. The poison could be sold to doctors wanting anesthesia, or drug addicts wanting oblivion for a few days or rangers and assassins and kidnappers looking to take down their targets nonlethally. That poison is probably worth a bit of gold itself, especially if it keeps for more than a few days once the urchin fires the spine.

11-25-2009, 07:36 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The more I think about it, the more I want to use land urchins- they would easily displace most herbivores their own size and possibly even large ones like horses and elephants. Their predators would have to be very small (parasites) or immune to the poison. Plants with tough leaves like holly would be so much more common where the urchins have taken over.

11-27-2009, 06:58 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Well, for the silver urchin (the one whose gem is worth up to 2500 gp), the poison causes catatonia for 1 to 3 days, according to the Fiend Folio. Which is a bonus, not a disadvantage. Farm the urchins for their poison, then harvest the gems when they die. The poison could be sold to doctors wanting anesthesia, or drug addicts wanting oblivion for a few days or rangers and assassins and kidnappers looking to take down their targets nonlethally. That poison is probably worth a bit of gold itself, especially if it keeps for more than a few days once the urchin fires the spine.

Excellent point. Of course, the deadlier poisons of some other Urchins are also valuable, for disposing of monsters, vermin as well as more nefarious uses.

Would it be inconvenient for you to list the FF poisons of the other Urchins? My copy of the book is buried away somewhere, so I don't have them to hand. If I remember correctly, the weakest did hit point damage as a "Type A poison", there were two "save or dies" (one with weak bonus with a save bonus) and one Urchin caused paralysis. I'm probably mistaken though, since it is well over a decade since I read it.

11-27-2009, 07:10 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The more I think about it, the more I want to use land urchins- they would easily displace most herbivores their own size and possibly even large ones like horses and elephants. Their predators would have to be very small (parasites) or immune to the poison. Plants with tough leaves like holly would be so much more common where the urchins have taken over.

Well, land urchins can't climb, so presumably would only be able to feed on very low vegetation. I'd think even a short tree like holly would be pretty safe except for when it is a newly sprouted shoot.

Still, you're right that Land Urchins could easily become a dominant herbivore, displacing regular animals. Of course, there are whole hordes of AD&D monsters that on paper look like they'd out compete natural animals. The ecology of most 'realistic' D&D worlds should be much more bizarre than they tend to be. Maybe we could do a "How an AD&D world's ecology would really work" sometime, with a land overrun by those monsters with superfast reproduction cycles.

Speaking of reproduction, I suspect Land Urchins still need to return to the sea to breed, spawning plankton-sized eggs. That would be both a limiting factor in their spread (since they'd only live within easy rolling-distance of a coastline) and an aid in dispersal (since juveniles could walk out of the sea on the coast of many lands).

11-27-2009, 07:20 PM

Sanglorian

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I know we left unicorns behind some time ago, but I just finished Glen Cook's *Sweet Silver Blues*. Unicorns have tracking dogs, their ears clipped by unicorn bites, that hunt down prey. Then the unicorns - a harem and its male leader - attack and consume their prey. The male is lazy and cowardly, so most of the fighting is done by the women ... but kill the male and the females will fight until dead.

They used the unicorn horns to tip spears that killed vampires instantly - though one of the adventurers was, in true D&D style, complaining about the lost market value each time a unicorn spear was used.

Conventional unicorns do have a bit of a role as mounts for high-level paladins, since at those levels any normal steed will be blasted out from underneath you by a dragon's breath or a wizard's *fireball*.

I also remember an adventure hook in *Dragon* many years ago: a hunter of all beasts who renounced his ways some eighteen-years ago ... long enough to raise a pure-hearted, virgin daughter to adulthood and put her in a position to attract a unicorn, the one beast he had never managed to slay.

11-28-2009, 01:10 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sanglorian**

I know we left unicorns behind some time ago, but I just finished Glen Cook's *Sweet Silver Blues*. Unicorns have tracking dogs, their ears clipped by unicorn bites, that hunt down prey. Then the unicorns - a harem and its male leader - attack and consume their prey. The male is lazy and cowardly, so most of the fighting is done by the women ... but kill the male and the females will fight until dead.

They used the unicorn horns to tip spears that killed vampires instantly - though one of the adventurers was, in true D&D style, complaining about the lost market value each time a unicorn spear was used.

Welcome aboard Sanglorian. I'm very fond of Glen Cook's Garrett series, and it has a lot of material that's easily ~~stolen~~ used as inspiration for fantasy roleplaying games, including his take on Carnivorous Unicorns.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sanglorian**

Conventional unicorns do have a bit of a role as mounts for high-level paladins, since at those levels any normal steed will be blasted out from underneath you by a dragon's breath or a wizard's *fireball*.

Problem is, a standard AD&D unicorn just doesn't have the hit points to pull it off. At 4+4 HD they average 22 hits - one puff of dragon's breath of *fireball* could take them out.

11-28-2009, 04:31 AM

Endugu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well, land urchins can't climb, so presumably would only be able to feed on very low vegetation. I'd think even a short tree like holly would be pretty safe except for when it is a newly sprouted shoot.

Id like to chime in here just to mention that urchins dont "roll around", but instead have a clearly dfined top and bottom and, like starfish and other Echinoderms, walk around on lots of tiny legs. Obviously, land urchins would have stronger legs, but they should be able to climb quite well (similar to a bug), albeit probably - in true urchin fashion - really slowly.

That nitpick aside, I like the idea of land urchins that have to return to the sea in order to reproduce - reminds me of the Christmas Island red crab and the way they overrun the island periodically.

Maybe a druid is looking for some help to prevent the yearly slaughtering of thousands of land urchins by those that see it as the easiest opportunity to get the urchin gems. Of course, the local peasants would love to see them gone, since every year they loose cattle and lives to the land urchins' poison...

11-28-2009, 07:14 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Excellent point. Of course, the deadlier poisons of some other Urchins are also valuable, for disposing of monsters, vermin as well as more nefarious uses.

Deadly poison is also valuable, but less safe to harvest.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Would it be inconvenient for you to list the FF poisons of the other Urchins?

I'm currently away from my copy of the Fiend Folio due to Thanksgiving at the moment. Maybe on Monday.

11-28-2009, 08:12 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Well, land urchins can't climb

We don't know that. Many animals, like elephants and dogs, that can swim well don't have listed swim speeds. If they could climb, I would expect that the urchins would have a climb speed of 1 or 3.

11-29-2009, 04:59 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Endugu**

Id like to chime in here just to mention that urchins dont "roll around", but instead have a clearly dfined top and bottom and, like starfish and other Echinoderms, walk around on lots of tiny legs. Obviously, land urchins would have stronger legs, but they should be able to climb quite well (similar to a bug), albeit probably - in true urchin fashion - really slowly.

True enough for real-world Echinoidea, but the AD&D variety is quite different. The Monstrous Manual entry for Urchin specifically says "While on land, urchins move via rolling" under Habitat/Society, and the description of the Land Urchin says they "move on five spindly legs". If I remember the illustration of the latter in the Fiend Folio correctly said legs appeared to be rigid stilts or rods that didn't look like they'd be much use for climbing, unlike the sucker-tipped flexible appendages of an actual Echinoidea.

When combined with their other differences to ordinary sea urchins - the higher-than-animal intelligence, clairvoyance, internal gems and the ability to project poisoned spines - they may have as little actual relationship to a true Echinoidea as an AD&D Kraken has to a garden snail.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Endugu**

That nitpick aside, I like the idea of land urchins that have to return to the sea in order to reproduce - reminds me of the [Christmas Island red crab](#) and the way they overrun the island periodically.

I was thinking of the Christmas Island crabs when suggesting the terrestrial Urchin returned to the sea to spawn. Although I like the idea of the Land Urchin's aquatic larvae being more motile than those crabs, which emerge back on Christmas Island, so that they can walk onto the shores of far-off lands.

11-29-2009, 05:02 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

We don't know that. Many animals, like elephants and dogs, that can swim well don't have listed swim speeds. If they could climb, I would expect that the urchins would have a climb speed of 1 or 3.

Well I'll grant you that it doesn't explicitly say Land Urchins can't climb, but they don't look like they're built for it.

Besides, this is AD&D - surely if the Gods meant Land Urchins to climb they'd give them a Climb Speed, or a thieves' Climb Walls percentage.~)

11-29-2009, 05:34 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Now I want to play a sea urchin mountaineer. I'll pair up with a grouchy old cave fisher with hip-boots and a chest full of lures to dangle from its tacky tongue (everything from gold coins to iron rations). If any bipedal adventurers are silly enough to pass under our lairs, I'll weave the cave fisher's tongue through my spines as a safety harness and rappel down the wall to ambush them. If things go bad (i.e. I'm just a level appropriate challenge for this intrepid band), I just yank the tongue and get hauled to safety as fast the old bug fisher's reel can spin.

In between adventures, we can sit and reminisce and yell at the kids to get off our rock shelf.

11-29-2009, 05:54 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

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You wouldn't need to drop within melee-reach of the adventurers, of course, since Urchins are ranged-attack monsters. Just dangle 20 feet above their heads and riddle them with poisoned spines.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

In between adventures, we can sit and reminisce and yell at the kids to get off our rock shelf.

...and boast about the size of the adventurers you'd successfully spined, and those that got away. :)

Hmm, maybe get that bugbear taxonomist down the cave to stuff a prize catch for mounting on the cave wall, over a little bronze plaque saying "Human Fighter, 6 foot 7 inches and 263 pounds, caught 1158 May 23."

11-29-2009, 06:00 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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(Nitpick: "Echinoidea" is the class. An individual member is an echinoid.)

What I want to know is why PETA girl didn't stop this ridiculous slander of innocent echinoderms! It's her duty to stand up for all cute animals.

Oh, and 80% land urchins form pearls within their bodies. Further evidence TSR were on drugs the lot of them. Made from magical myconids, probably.

11-30-2009, 05:37 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well I'll grant you that it doesn't explicitly say Land Urchins can't climb, but they don't look like they're built for it.

Besides, this is AD&D - surely if the Gods meant Land Urchins to climb they'd give them a Climb Speed, or a thieves' Climb Walls percentage.;

No way. They'd have come up with a fiddly rule for climbing that doesn't resemble the climbing rules found anywhere else, with specific percentages for certain random surfaces. Or maybe a chance based on rolling a d12 for every ten feet climbed or something.

12-01-2009, 04:58 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

No way. They'd have come up with a fiddly rule for climbing that doesn't resemble the climbing rules found anywhere else, with specific percentages for certain random surfaces. Or maybe a chance based on rolling a d12 for every ten feet climbed or something.

That sounds horribly plausible, or they'd use the traditional "a Land Urchin climbs sheer surfaces as a 5th level thief." without bothering to give a percentage, forcing DMs who haven't memorized the Players' Handbook tables to look it up.

12-01-2009, 06:25 PM

Endugu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

True enough for real-world Echinoidea, but the AD&D variety is quite different. The Monstrous Manual entry for Urchin specifically says "While on land, urchins move via rolling" under Habitat/Society, and the description of the Land Urchin says they "move on five spindly legs". If I remember the illustration of the latter in the Fiend Folio correctly said legs appeared to be rigid

stilts or rods that didn't look like they'd be much use for climbing, unlike the sucker-tipped flexible appendages of an actual Echinoidea.

Ah ok, fair enough. :)

To be honest, the image that they are rolling around makes them less interesting to me, though I cant say exactyl why that is.

12-01-2009, 06:28 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

With all this talk about urchins, I wonder why TSR didn't bring out the dreaded landstars - seastars on land!

12-01-2009, 10:57 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

^ There are two types of landstars. The big, long-haul variety. Owner-operator teamsters (-stars?) who ride their big nags and criss-cross the land carrying freight from one stop to the next. And the stealthy clans of landstar assassins, who throw themselves spinning out of the darkness.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Endugu**

Ah ok, fair enough. :)

To be honest, the image that they are rolling around makes them less interesting to me, though I cant say exactyl why that is.

In the dry Forgotten West, the locals know trouble's a brewing when the sky turns dark and the wind starts to blow. The land urchins start blowing into town like tumbleweeds, and the only one able to stop them is the new halfling sheriff.

12-02-2009, 01:42 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

With all this talk about urchins, I wonder why TSR didn't bring out the dreaded landstars - seastars on land!

If memory serves me right, TSR actually did publish something like that, albeit for Gamma World rather than AD&D. Wasn't there a giant mutant starfish that roamed the land, seizing prey in its five arms to devour with a central maw.

There was a very similar monster in Hârn, which buried itself in the ground and grabbed anything careless enough to walk over it.

12-02-2009, 01:46 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

^ There are two types of landstars. The big, long-haul variety. Owner-operator teamsters (-stars?) who ride their big nags and criss-cross the land carrying freight from one stop to the next. And the stealthy clans of landstar assassins, who throw themselves spinning out of the darkness.

My friends the Sea Caballeros whisper of another kind of abovewater starfish that is far more terrible, with the ability to fly through the air at amazing speed and shoot bolts of coruscating energy from the tips of its arms. It is rumoured that these **Shooting Stars** fell from some alien sphere beyond the sky.

12-02-2009, 02:03 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

My friends the Sea Caballeros whisper of another kind of abovewater starfish that is far more terrible, with the ability to fly through the air at amazing speed and shoot bolts of coruscating energy from the tips of its arms. It is rumoured that these **Shooting Stars** fell from some alien sphere beyond the sky.

Among the tritons, who know a little about realms beyond realms and seas behind seas, it is said that these star-stars came from the first planet known to sustain life. In a time before reckoning, they cast themselves into the cosmos in a vast diaspora that pierced a million million crystal spheres. Most of these intrepid asteroideans were lost in the vastness of space, but at least one landed on each planet that is now inhabited by living creatures. Their progeny spread, diversified, filled entire ecosystems. For it was from these ancient starites, that all the myriad lifeforms in this universe were born. The tritons call this theory "panstarria".

12-02-2009, 02:41 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

There was a very similar monster in Hårn, which buried itself in the ground and grabbed anything careless enough to walk over it.

Perhaps the Landstar does exist in D&D, albeit by a different name:

http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/alumni_trapper1st.jpg

The Trapper!

I think at some point in the past we discussed the medieval theory that there is a water based equivalent to everything on land, hence catfish, monkfish, mermaids, sea lions, sea cows, etc. But the land urchins and landsharks and some other D&D monsters imply that the reverse is also true: everything under the sea has a land based parallel creature. There are skywhales in some D&D supplement, and land going squids and octopi and such, right? what other cool undersea creatures might exist on land?

12-02-2009, 02:48 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Excellent point. Of course, the deadlier poisons of some other Urchins are also valuable, for disposing of monsters, vermin as well as more nefarious uses.

Would it be inconvenient for you to list the FF poisons of the other Urchins?

Let's see:

Black urchins just do 1-6 damage.

Green urchins do 2-7 damage.

Red do some damage and can cause sleep for a few rounds.

Silver put you catatonic for a few days.

Yellow paralyzes the victim for a few rounds.

None are quite "save or die", though being paralyzed or unconscious for even a few rounds is pretty close. "Out for 3 days" is pretty much game over, if the urchins have any reason to kill the PCs... or even if they don't, the encounter is 90% likely to be underwater, and your waterbreathing spell will wear off well before then.

12-02-2009, 03:01 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

what other cool undersea creatures might exist on land?

Herds of squinners roam the plains, spinning like tops. Their mantles end in a hardened point made of modified fins, on which they rotate. Their arms whip around at high speeds like helicopter blades, helping them pick up velocity and serving as a balancing mechanism. They whirr as they stalk their prey, snatching terrified herbivores with the tacky clubs at the end of one of their two enlongated feeding tentacles. Captured victims are tossed high into the air, where they are snapped up by the beak on the topmost portion of their body.

Oh wait. That sounds more like a Gamma World monster.

12-02-2009, 05:57 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Oh wait. That sounds more like a Gamma World monster.

So do giant spiky balls that shoot spines covered in sleep poison, with psychic powers and inborn gems.

12-02-2009, 06:07 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

So do giant spiky balls that shoot spines covered in sleep poison, with psychic powers and inborn gems.

No, the gems are definitely D&D. Think carbuncle.

But you're right about the rest. :)

12-02-2009, 06:20 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

No, the gems are definitely D&D. Think carbuncle.

Well, what if the gems were mainly useful for replacing the lenses on laser pistols? Then it'd be totally Gamma World.

EDIT: A lot of Fiend Folio monsters tread that line, I think. Lot of weird stuff in there.

12-02-2009, 07:02 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Well, what if the gems were mainly useful for replacing the lenses on laser pistols? Then it'd be totally Gamma World.

We could go all the way. Give sea urchins antlers, and then stick a radioactive eye on the end of every spine. Now all we need is a name, like Burp Ho-tep.

12-03-2009, 02:05 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

I think at some point in the past we discussed the medieval theory that there is a water based equivalent to everything on land, hence catfish, monkfish, mermaids, sea lions, sea cows, etc. But the land urchins and landsharks and some other D&D monsters imply that the reverse is also true: everything under the sea has a land based parallel creature. There are skywhales in some D&D

supplement, and land going squids and octopi and such, right? what other cool undersea creatures might exist on land?

Let's see, there are the obvious ones like cave moray eels, flying sharks and rays or terrestrial cephalopods (all of which already have official AD&D stats, if I remember correctly), and I remember seeing a "killer whale with legs" somewhere, but I'm sure we could come up with some more bizarre animals.

The Land Ammonite, a giant shell that rolls across the plains, running over its prey and then shooting out tentacles to pull them into its beak.

The Thunder Eel, a flying electric eel with the lightning-shooting powers that implies.

The Giant Terrestrial Coneshell, which harpoons its prey with a tentacle tipped with a deadly poisonous barb, then everts its stomach to swallow its paralyzed victim alive.

The Devouring Star, an apparently harmless spiny starfish crawling over the ground, but it is incredibly fecund. Within months a single creature can become a hungry horde that strips a Kingdom's fields down to bare earth, leaving the population to starve. Chopping them to pieces does no good - the larger fragments just grow into new Devouring Stars. The peasants can't even eat them, since their flesh is poisonous.

12-03-2009, 02:09 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

We could go all the way. Give sea urchins antlers, and then stick a radioactive eye on the end of every spine. Now all we need is a name, like Burp Ho-tep.

Problem is, that breed of Radioactive Land Urchin uses its eye-gems to shoot death rays, their focusing properties are why GW scavengers can use them as laspistol lenses.

12-03-2009, 02:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Let's see:

Black urchins just do 1-6 damage.

Green urchins do 2-7 damage.

Red do some damage and can cause sleep for a few rounds.

Silver put you catatonic for a few days.

Yellow paralyzes the victim for a few rounds.

None are quite "save or die", though being paralyzed or unconscious for even a few rounds is pretty close. "Out for 3 days" is pretty much game over, if the urchins have any reason to kill the PCs... or even if they don't, the encounter is 90% likely to be underwater, and your waterbreathing spell will wear off well before then.

Ta Mr Teapot, I remembered their toxins got worse as they increased in HD, as is the usual habit with groups of related D&D monsters.

12-03-2009, 03:01 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The Thunder Eel, a flying electric eel with the lightning-shooting powers that implies.

A feathered sea serpent. A thunder bird with a Mesoamerican twist?

12-03-2009, 03:09 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The Devouring Star, an apparently harmless spiny starfish crawling over the ground, but it is incredibly fecund. Within months a single creature can become a hungry horde that strips a Kingdom's fields down to bare earth, leaving the population to starve. Chopping them to pieces does no good - the larger fragments just grow into new Devouring Stars. The peasants can't even eat them, since their flesh is poisonous.

But they do make good tinder. The smoke from the fires is slightly addictive and gives humans and dwarves the giggles. Slipping it into a dwarven communities communal bonfire earns a sentence of hard labor.

And Burp Ho-Tep? GW has a lot of strange names, but nothing like that.

12-03-2009, 03:14 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I remember seeing a "killer whale with legs" somewhere,

Might that be the Darfellan?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The Devouring Star, an apparently harmless spiny starfish crawling over the ground, but it is incredibly fecund. Within months a single creature can become a hungry horde that strips a Kingdom's fields down to bare earth, leaving the population to starve. Chopping them to pieces does no good - the larger fragments just grow into new Devouring Stars. The peasants can't even eat them, since their flesh is poisonous.

I like this because it's the sort of thing a village would ask a D&D adventuring party to deal with, but it can't be defeated by fighting it. And it fits the weird D&D creature sort of vibe. Might become a new extraplanar creature, if we ever play the game I GM again.

12-03-2009, 03:16 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

And Burp Ho-Tep? GW has a lot of strange names, but nothing like that.

Barl nep, ber lep, narl ep... I'm just following the euphonic tradition :)

12-03-2009, 10:03 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

But they do make good tinder. The smoke from the fires is slightly addictive and gives humans and dwarves the giggles. Slipping it into a dwarven communities communal bonfire earns a sentence of hard labor.

That's because the dwarves know better than to burn them. Sure the smokes only slightly addictive *at first*, but the effect just gets stronger and stronger. Many are lucky and just go "starry eyed" giggling idiots that just sit around staring and talking nonsense, A few unlucky ones have their perceptions expanded too far and see Things From Beyond - and those Things see them back. Some go violently crazy, others go quietly mad and begin worshipping the Things and trying to call them down to earth.

12-03-2009, 10:08 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Might that be the Darfellan?

No, it wasn't an anthropomorphic orca, it was literally a killer whale with four short legs, like a bulette with rubbery black & white skin and a dorsal fin. I can remember the illustration, but can't for the life of me recall where I saw it.

12-03-2009, 10:14 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

A feathered sea serpent. A thunder bird with a Mesoamerican twist?

Not what I was thinking. They're eels - slimy nasty things writhing in the air, darting down to strike with *shocking grasps*. Every once in a while they swarm, clustering in great writhing masses that form the centres of gloomy thunderstorms that rain down lightning upon their prey.

12-03-2009, 10:14 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Not what I was thinking. They're eels - slimy nasty things writhing in the air, darting down to strike with *shocking grasps*. Every once in a while they swarm, clustering in great writhing masses that form the centres of gloomy thunderstorms that rain down lightning upon their prey.

Either way, the Feathered Eel needs to exist.

She accepts only virginal hobgoblins dipped in chocolate for sacrifices.

12-03-2009, 10:42 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

Either way, the Feathered Eel needs to exist.

She accepts only virginal hobgoblins dipped in chocolate for sacrifices.

I heard many tolerate flawless halflings stuffed with chili peppers, but Epicurean Feathered Eels demand virginal chocolate-coated hobgoblins stuffed with halflings filled with chili peppers.

12-03-2009, 10:50 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

That's because the dwarves know better than to burn them. Sure the smokes only slightly addictive *at first*, but the effect just gets stronger and stronger. Many are lucky and just go "starry eyed" giggling idiots that just sit around staring and talking nonsense, A few unlucky ones have their perceptions expanded too far and see Things From Beyond - and those Things see them back. Some go violently crazy, others go quietly mad and begin worshiping the Things and trying to call them down to earth.

In the interests of humanity, the Sea Caballeros have asked me to pass on a simple technique for safely disposing of Devouring Stars. It turns out that while they are fully amphibious, breathing both air and water, they're like frogs in that they can only breathe **fresh** water. Put them in salt water and osmosis will give their internal fluids a fatal ion imbalance.

So, rather ironically, you can kill Devouring Starfish by *throwing them into the sea*.

12-04-2009, 01:18 AM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

No, it wasn't an anthropomorphic orca, it was literally a killer whale with four short legs, like a bulette with rubbery black & white skin and a dorsal fin. I can remember the illustration, but can't for the life of me recall where I saw it.

I think you're recalling the Lankhmar Behemoth from "Deities and Demigods"

Imagine a killer whale with four stubby legs and no fins and you have the perfect image of a behemoth. These mammals are easily capable of crossing water, marsh grass, and quicksand. There are several types, but each version always attacks the largest living thing in any given group. The behemoth has a keen sense of smell and is a persistent tracker.

12-04-2009, 02:27 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

^ Yes, there is art of a killer whale with stubby legs in the Nehwon section of Deities & Demigods.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

Either way, the Feathered Eel needs to exist.

She accepts only virginal hobgoblins dipped in chocolate for sacrifices.

Maybe a dog-like kobold instead?

Quote:

Originally Posted by "**Cacao**" at Wikipedia

The Maya believed that the kakaw (cacao) was discovered by the gods in a mountain that also contained other delectable foods to be used by the Maya. According to Maya mythology, the Plumed Serpent gave cacao to the Maya after humans were created from maize by divine grandmother goddess Xmucane (Bogin 1997, Coe 1996, Montejo 1999, Tedlock 1985). The Maya celebrated an annual festival in April to honor their cacao god, Ek Chuah, an event that included the sacrifice of a dog with cacao colored markings; additional animal sacrifices; offerings of cacao, feathers and incense; and an exchange of gifts. In a similar creation story, the Mexica (Aztec) god Quetzalcoatl discovered cacao (cacahuatl: "'bitter water'"), in a mountain filled with other plant foods (Coe 1996, Townsend 1992). Cacao was offered regularly to a pantheon of Mexica deities and the Madrid Codex depicts priests lancing their ear lobes (autosacrifice) and covering the cacao with blood as a suitable sacrifice to the gods. The cacao beverage as ritual were used only by men, as it was believed to be toxic for women and children.

There are several mixtures of cacao described in ancient texts, for ceremonial, medicinal uses as well as culinary purposes. Some mixtures included maize, chili, vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia*), peanut butter and honey.

12-04-2009, 02:39 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**
Either way, the Feathered Eel needs to exist.

Perhaps it is the land based equivalent of a leafy sea dragon?

12-04-2009, 06:37 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **HaplessVictim**
I think you're recalling the Lankhmar Behemoth from "Deities and Demigods"
Imagine a killer whale with four stubby legs and no fins and you have the perfect image of a behemoth. These mammals are easily capable of crossing water, marsh grass, and quicksand. There are several types, but each version always attacks the largest living thing in any given group. The behemoth has a keen sense of smell and is a persistent tracker.

Thanks chaps, that sounds like the beast I was thinking of. I can't find the picture on the web, so I'd have to dig out my copy of Deities & Demigods to be sure, and I'm probably too lazy to do so.:)

It certainly rings a bell. I remember the picture having a dorsal fin, but that may be my memory playing tricks (or the artist not reading the description!). Then again, from what I recall of my Fritz Leiber reading he didn't say much about what the Behemoths of Nehwon actually look like, so the "finless orca with legs" appearance may be more TSR than Leiber.

They'll have dorsal fins in MY game, irregardless.:mad:;)

12-04-2009, 06:45 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**
Perhaps it is the land based equivalent of a leafy sea dragon?

I'd have thought a Leafy Arboreal Dragon would be a harmless little insect-eater that lives in forests, using its prehensile tail and wing-fins to climb along branches and fly between trees.

Of course there are those rumours of them cross-breeding with green dragons, producing a giant monster that spits streams of hydrochloric acid to dissolve its prey, then slurping up the resulting soup, but those are just lumberjack's tales.

Or are they...:D

12-22-2009, 11:55 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

A note to let everyone know I haven't forgotten about this thread, or died, or anything like that. Just busy, and Vampire is a fucking LONG entry. Should be a proper update later today or tomorrow.

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

A note to let everyone know I haven't forgotten about this thread, or died, or anything like that. Just busy, and Vampire is a fucking LONG entry. Should be a proper update later today or tomorrow.

That's okay Noisms, no need to worry.

I'd be glad of the extra time, since I'm having trouble coming up with anything interesting to say about Vampires that hasn't already been done to (un)death.

12-23-2009, 12:50 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I'd be glad of the extra time, since I'm having trouble coming up with anything interesting to say about Vampires that hasn't already been done to (un)death.

Vampires are actually plants. That whole dead-body rictus rigor no breathing tough as nails thing? They're not made of dead (or living) flesh. It's woody plant stuff. They're like the white bottom part you snap off before cooking asparagus.

The sunlight thing is a plain ol' mythstake. They don't burst into flame. They need sun; it's life. Photosynthesis and all. But they do hide away. Just not in coffins stashed away amid the loam and must in basements. They hide in plain sight.

When you visit the next gothic castle, with big brooding battlements, moats full of scum and dark sudden movements, and ghostly slips vanishing from the corner of one's eyes, look outside. On the trellises and clambering up the walls. The creepers and explosion of vines and tendrils may just be a vampire, in its day-guise.

12-23-2009, 01:28 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Vampires are actually plants. That whole dead-body rictus rigor no breathing tough as nails thing? They're not made of dead (or living) flesh. It's woody plant stuff. They're like the white bottom part you snap off before cooking asparagus.

... This can't be. That wouldn't sparkle *at all*.

12-23-2009, 01:40 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

... This can't be. That wouldn't sparkle *at all*.

They do if you sniff their pollen. Mmm.... hallucinations.

All the cool kids are doing it.

12-23-2009, 03:32 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Comments on the vampire as presented in the 2nd ed MM:

Vampires being chaotic evil always seemed really weird to me. Not as weird as goblins being lawful, but weird. I think vampires are given chaotic evil just because some TSR writer thought Chaotic Evil was somehow more evil than regular old Neutral Evil or Lawful Evil. Vampires, as immortal scheming intellectual monsters always struck me as a great example of a lawful evil villain: they can work with humans to advance their goals. Johnathan Harker in *Dracula* is initially hired to be Dracula's lawyer, for Gygax's sake. How many Slaads hire lawyers? (Okay so there was that one Planescape adventure... but that's another entry.)

The entry even describes vampires by saying "When deciding on a course of action or planning a campaign, vampires move very slowly and meticulously. It is not uncommon for a vampire to undertake some scheme which may take decades or even centuries to reach its conclusion." Which doesn't sound chaotic at all.

Second, the vampire has a couple of exploitable weaknesses that don't come up much, like recoiling from mirrors and taking a big hunk of damage from running water. And a random line about holy wafers that seems out of context. Do any D&D religions use holy wafers in their ceremonies? Does Pelor transubstantiate stale bread and crummy wine into his body and blood?

Third, the vampires energy drain thing is by now thoroughly established in D&D but never seemed grounded in vampire myth or fiction anywhere. Was it just too difficult to have the vampire bite people? Or attack in combat using their slew of other powers?

Four, if the vampire can just *charm* someone inside a building, then that whole "can't enter unless invited" thing isn't a big hindrance, is it? (In the original Ravenloft module, Strahd had some pet werewolves burst through the walls to invite him in, which has more style than mindcontrolling a serving girl.)

I'm not really sure what to make of the "eastern vampire" entry, since it's so short and devoid of context. Are we talking about an eastern european vampire? A chinese vampire? Is it a monster more fully explained elsewhere and given short shrift in the MM?

12-26-2009, 03:12 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Vampires are actually plants. That whole dead-body rictus rigor no breathing tough as nails thing? They're not made of dead (or living) flesh. It's woody plant stuff. They're like the white bottom part you snap off before cooking asparagus.

The sunlight thing is a plain ol' mythstake. They don't burst into flame. They need sun; it's life. Photosynthesis and all. But they do hide away. Just not in coffins stashed away amid the loam and must in basements. They hide in plain sight.

When you visit the next gothic castle, with big brooding battlements, moats full of scum and dark sudden movements, and ghostly slips vanishing from the corner of one's eyes, look outside. On the trellises and clambering up the walls. The creepers and explosion of vines and tendrils may just be a vampire, in its day-guise.

Nah, you're way off base. Think about it - these are creatures with the pallid skin of a mushroom that they spend all their time in the dark, they have some powerful mind-affecting ability over their victims (psychotropic venom in their bite?) and if you 'destroy' them they often just pop back up in their coffins (a new fruiting body).

Clearly, Dracula was just a fungi.

12-26-2009, 03:28 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Comments on the vampire as presented in the 2nd ed MM:

Vampires being chaotic evil always seemed really weird to me. Not as weird as goblins being lawful, but weird. I think vampires are given chaotic evil just because some TSR writer thought Chaotic Evil was somehow more evil than regular old Neutral Evil or Lawful Evil. Vampires, as immortal scheming intellectual monsters always struck me as a great example of a lawful evil villain: they can work with humans to advance their goals. Johnathan Harker in *Dracula* is initially hired to be Dracula's lawyer, for Gygax's sake. How many Slaads hire lawyers? (Okay so there was that one Planescape adventure... but that's another entry.)

Yes it is odd, it'd make more sense if most of AD&D's sapient undead could be any evil (with a capital E!) alignment. There should be far more Neutral Evil ones, for a start.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Third, the vampires energy drain thing is by now thoroughly established in D&D but never seemed grounded in vampire myth or fiction anywhere. Was it just too difficult to have the vampire bite people? Or attack in combat using their slew of other powers?

There are some variant AD&D vampires which have blood-drain, but most of them have this **as well as** energy drain, which seems rather redundant - most PCs would prefer a temporary loss of a few hit points or Con than losing a level or three!

One thing I'm wondering is whether the energy drain makes it hard for AD&D vampires to masquerade as living people. The power is due to their dual Prime-and-Negative Material Plane existence, which leads me to suspect they can't turn it off. How do you keep pretending to be an ordinary mortal if you can't shake a shopkeeper's hand without sucking the life out of them?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

I'm not really sure what to make of the "eastern vampire" entry, since it's so short and devoid of context. Are we talking about an eastern european vampire? A chinese vampire? Is it a monster more fully explained elsewhere and given short shrift in the MM?

I have no idea. Turning invisible is a very common supernatural power, so it's hard to narrow down.

EDIT: Oh yes, and Merry Christmas everybody!

12-26-2009, 04:35 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Nah, you're way off base. Think about it - these are creatures with the pallid skin of a mushroom that they spend all their time in the dark, they have some powerful mind-affecting ability over their victims (psychotropic venom in their bite?) and if you 'destroy' them they often just pop back up in their coffins (a new fruiting body).

Clearly, Dracula was just a fungi.

You're clearly under the influence of the pollen of *Drosera vampiricus*. What have we told the student teratologists? Don't taste, snort, or even sniff the biological samples!

They're plants. True plants. Colonial organisms, like aspens. Runners connect the various apparently separate plants. Laypersons often mistake these protrusions for coffins.

From these spring the stalks and creepers, which take on a human-like semblance during the night. The mostly widely known variety is what is known as a "vampire" in common parlance. These flowering vines can temporarily separate from the main plant, generally reattaching only during the twilight hours of dusk and dawn. During the day, they bask in the sunlight in their creeper form, absorbing energy via photosynthesis.

During the night, they take on the human-appearing form. This form is extremely active, and photosynthesis alone does not meet their steep energy requirements. Their carnivorous adaptations are a way of meeting this deficiency.

Their pollen is used as a lure. Like the perfume of pitcher plants or venus fly traps, it is irresistible to their prey. Youthful women, mostly, though a growing number of specimens have been found, primarily in the Western Marches but spreading, that attract young males of the humanoid species instead.

At any one time, only one component of the colonial organism fully flowers. This is the source of the popular "vampire" myths, since the detached plant supplements its diet with humanoid blood.

The other "coffins" also generate human-appearing flowering tendrils, but these simulacra are often imperfect, distorted. Uncontrolled twitching, hunchbacks, and various and sundry other grotesqueries have been reported. Their feeding mechanism is also imperfectly developed. They cannot revert to creeper form during the day, and thus are unable to absorb energy via photosynthesis. These humanoid forms are unable to ingest blood and must instead subsist on a diet of insects, rats, and other vermin. This inferior food source explains their limited lifespan; they wither, turn brown, and die over the space of a few weeks. They also lack the hypnotic aura of pollen and their limited diet makes them weaker than the master creeper, to whom these "minions" are utterly subservient.

12-26-2009, 05:48 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

/|\ I thought that was elves.

12-26-2009, 05:43 PM

lthaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

There are some variant AD&D vampires which have blood-drain, but most of them have this **as well as** energy drain, which seems rather redundant - most PCs would prefer a temporary loss of a few hit points or Con than losing a level or three!

Yeah. If you read the MM vampire entry, you'll notice that *there is no mention* of vampires drinking blood! They don't have a bite attack. Their diet is not "blood" but "special", and the ecology section talks about how they sustain themselves on the life energy they drain. (And with them draining two levels (IIRC) per "slam attack", you won't have any survivors from 99% of vampire attacks!)

Blood-drinking is *the most iconic* quality of vampires, yet it's completely and totally ignored, in favor of the bullshit energy drain mechanic of D&D undead. Yet every little bit of the *Dracula*-based vampire lore is used, including the utterly redundant ability to spider climb (when the vamps can turn into bats or vapor and just fly)!

Vampires are one of the places where (A)D&D drops the ball, I think.

12-26-2009, 10:03 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Vampire

[A putative discussion is already emerging, I see. I'll write this post in light of that.]

First things first, let me say that I don't really like vampires all that much. I wasn't much interested in them when they were pallid aristocrats in black tie, wasn't much interested in them when they became kewl yet apathetic epicureans, and wasn't much interested in them when they got all emo. When they were bald Wallachians with very long fingers they were okay, I suppose.

Second things second, probably as a result of the fact that I'm not much into vampires, I've never used one as a DM.

Now, on with the entry. The first thing that strikes me about AD&D vampires is how old school they are. 1989 really was a different era. This was before *Blade*, before *Interview with the Vampire*, before *V: tM* and long long before *Twilight*. AD&D vampires are the ones we remember from childhood stories - they cast no shadow, have no reflection, hate garlic, move silently, can turn into a giant bat, and can only enter a home if invited to do so. Think Christopher Lee rather than Robert Pattinson.

The second thing that strikes me about AD&D vampires is that there is a strong stench of the Mary Sue (perhaps Villain Sue?) about them - it isn't difficult to envisage a poor DM using this regenerating, uber-intelligent superbeing as a kind of stick with which to beat recalcitrant players. On the other hand, this is a complaint that can be levelled at most very powerful evil D&D beings, so I suppose it would be churlish of me to tar only vampires with that brush.

The most interesting aspects of the vampire are its peculiar aversion to garlic, its incapability of casting a shadow or causing a reflection, and its stipulations on entry to a dwelling. All of these can be interestingly worked into a game, particularly if the DM plays the vampire as trying to "pass" in mainstream society rather than acting as some kind of pantomime villain in a ruined castle somewhere.

Eastern Vampire

An ill-defined breed which can become invisible. I assume "Eastern" in this instance refers to East Asia, rather than Eastern Europe.

12-26-2009, 11:06 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Now, on with the entry. The first thing that strikes me about AD&D vampires is how old school they are. 1989 really was a different era. This was before *Blade*, before *Interview with the Vampire*, before *V: tM* and long long before *Twilight*. AD&D vampires are the ones we remember from childhood stories - they cast no shadow, have no reflection, hate garlic, move silently, can turn into a giant bat, and can only enter a home if invited to do so. Think Christopher Lee rather than Robert Pattinson.

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mainstream society rather than acting as some kind of pantomime villain in a ruined castle somewhere.

AD&D vampires are *way* too complex. They have more special abilities than anything this side of demons, and on top of that is stacked a dizzying array of restrictions. Makes them a pain to run.

You're right that they're dated, though. Sean K. Reynolds tried to address that in 3E with the flesh-bound vampire template, which recreates Buffy-style vampires. No mist, no mandatory coffins, no missing shadows, no problems shaving. I don't know if there's an equivalent for 1 or 2E. Basic D&D had the nosferatu, which swapped level drain for a blood sucking ability.

The Eastern vampire is kind of sad. ~~Dragon magazine #25 (and Best of #2) had a good selection of vampires from a variety of cultures. I think they just distilled that down to one.~~ Edit: I just remembered we can't blame 2E for the eastern vampire. They're from a paragraph in the 1st edition MM: "Vampires of the eastern world are invisible. This gives them all appropriate consideration for invisibility, including a -2 on 'to hit' dice rolls for opponents not able to see invisible objects. These vampires cannot *charm*, however, nor do they have power to *assume gaseous form* at will."

12-27-2009, 08:03 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

AD&D vampires are *way* too complex. They have more special abilities than anything this side of demons, and on top of that is stacked a dizzying array of restrictions. Makes them a pain to run.

Yep. A lot of the Big Evil Villain Monsters have that problem. Liches, Greater Mummies, Dracoliches, etc.

12-27-2009, 10:32 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yep. A lot of the Big Evil Villain Monsters have that problem. Liches, Greater Mummies, Dracoliches, etc.

Vampires were first, though. They were detailed in OD&D's LBBs and Greyhawk, and were one of the grossly-out-of-the-PCs'-league monsters in Holmes' blue book basic (which covered levels 1-3). Liches may have been fairly early as well, but they were basically just magic-users with a couple special effects. Dracoliches were towards the end of 1E, and weren't greater mummies a Ravenloft thing?

12-27-2009, 10:44 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yep. A lot of the Big Evil Villain Monsters have that problem. Liches, Greater Mummies, Dracoliches, etc.

I wouldn't say liches are a problem to run. They have almost none of the undead restrictions (sunlight being the big one) and can get around what little limitations they do have by magic. They are only of the very few undead I don't dislike.

12-28-2009, 09:22 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I wouldn't say liches are a problem to run. They have almost none of the undead restrictions (sunlight being the big one) and can get around what little limitations they do have by magic. They are only of the very few undead I don't dislike.

I was thinking mostly of demiliches. The sub-entry about them is basically a long list of complicated exception-based design stipulations.

12-28-2009, 11:07 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I was thinking mostly of demiliches. The sub-entry about them is basically a long list of complicated exception-based design stipulations.

(Spoilers for the first appearance of the demi-lich in a classically deadly module.)

Didn't the demi-lich first appear in the *Tomb of Horrors*?

look at the way Acererak was used in the module. Like the Green Devil Face, the way to "win" against the demi-lich is to ignore it. The entire purpose of most of its special abilities (the floating and screaming and phantoms and so forth) is to fool the players into attacking it. Until they attack it, it is fairly harmless.

Classic Gyax, actually. Don't hide the trap. Stick it smack-dab in the middle of the room, and let the players hang themselves by their own actions.

Similarly, the immunities are the equivalent of doors that are immune to all spells or rooms where teleport doesn't work. It's basically module short-hand for "for purposes of this adventure, your players can't use that solution". A crude one-shot plot device, that's all.

The demi-lich was designed to fulfill a very specific purpose, in a very specific scenario. The mistake was to take those very specific set of conditions developed for a very specific, and call it a monster.

12-28-2009, 09:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Vampires were first, though. They were detailed in OD&D's LBBs and Greyhawk, and were one of the grossly-out-of-the-PCs'-league monsters in Holmes' blue book basic (which covered levels 1-3).

SNIP

I used vampires now and again, since they are such an iconic monster, although I tend to have them filling roles apart from the classic aristocrat lurking in a desolate castle - most of the vamps in my campaign world live in big cities and try to blend in (e.g. I've had a vampire who prowled the corridors of a lunatic asylum at night, masquerading as a Doctor, and a "Vampire Granny").

As far as I'm concerned all their powers and restrictions are integral to the classic vampire, and I wouldn't want to remove them. It's part of their literary heritage that mundane heroes would find them terrible, nigh-unstoppable foes during the night. That's why all those restrictions are so important, since they make it possible for a low-medium level party that knows what it's doing to deal with such undead horrors - they use mirrors, holy symbols or a lack of invitation to avoid them during the hours of darkness, then play "hunt the coffin" during the day. Indeed, that opens them up to a classic "ticking timebomb" scenario:

Trapped in the Vampires' Catacomb, can our heroes unearth its coffin before it awakens and slays them all?

12-28-2009, 09:23 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

(Spoilers for the first appearance of the demi-lich in a classically deadly module.)

Yes, the Demi-Lich is more of a trap than an autonomous monster. I quite liked the explanation in The Return to the Tomb of Horrors module that it was actually a device for harvesting the souls of high-level characters for Acererak to use for its foul purposes.

12-29-2009, 11:28 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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What classic vampire? Stoker's Dracula didn't go poof in sunlight. Count Orlok from *Nosferatu* did, but he's rat-faced not a charming aristocrat. Ruthven was more suave, but magically healed in moonlight. Ancient folklore varied from myth to myth, even within the same region. Modern interpretations often strip out most of the more magical or metaphorical weaknesses, like the lack of a reflection or the vulnerability to running water, or come up with a pseudo-science rationale (stakes become an allergy to hawthorn). Hammer films? Perhaps the 1931 film? No, not even that. The AD&D vampire doesn't even seem to drink blood.

You make a good argument for keeping a variety of weaknesses, but there's a huge body of myth surrounding the classic Slavic vampire. They might have tails, turn into butterflies, or start as shadows and gradually develop a body. And that's not even considering the omnipresence of vampires and vampire-like creatures in cultures

around the world. Lots of weaknesses and strange limitations to raid. Reward players with the foresight to consult sages, churches, and professional vampire hunters for advice.

12-29-2009, 09:05 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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SNIP

Well in the case of AD&D the 'classic' vampire appears to be a portmanteau of Dracula and Dracula-clones as they have appeared in popular Western media from the turn of the century to the 70s, especially the movies.

Now I wonder how many of these traits (mirrors, garlic etc) Gyax gave "Sir Fang", one of the earliest (if not the original) D&D vampire. I think I remember seeing him saying something about it on a discussion thread somewhere.

As for alternative vampires, I'm all in favour of them, but would be very cautious of the "Haha! the wooden stake does nothing, for Count Incisor is an Eastern Madeupstanian vampire!" trope of having them look and act like a standard vampire but have very different weaknesses. It just doesn't seem very fair.

Instead, I like alternative vampires that look and act radically different to the "standard" variety - the breath-stealing rigid corpse, the flying charred fire-spitting undead witch, the bloated hollow cadaver, the pallid horror that can step in and out of mirrors and can kill by eating its victim's reflection, the bloody ghoul that only attacks at high noon, et cetera et cetera.

12-29-2009, 09:32 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Fair? Fair?!

This is D&D!

Is pounding a sphere of annihilation flat, sticking it in a doorframe, and then writing "magic portal to happy fun beach full of treasure and naked hot chicks with absolutely no monsters" next to it fair?

12-29-2009, 09:58 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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There is no "standard" vampire type. There are more common traits and less common traits, but not only has the vampire evolved from its early incarnations to modern portrayals, even within a specific region and time there is no such thing as a standard set of vampiric characteristics. Even the most genre-aware human protagonists in vampire fiction have to go through a stage where they learn which traditional weaknesses apply and which don't. Using your stake example -- what type of wood are they vulnerable to? Ash? Hawthorn? White oak? Any wood? Does it kill, or paralyze? Do they just die, or turn to dust?

The player and the GM are bound to have different interpretations. The only way players will know beforehand what works and what doesn't is if they read the Monstrous Manual. Instead, the DM can lay out rumors. Reward players who explore the setting, and take in-character actions to learn which vulnerabilities work and which are so much bunk. There's no need to go too far afield; just one odd characteristic or specific weakness is enough to differentiate the vampires in a particular world. But vampires that draw on lesser known legends can be fun, as well.

In fact, traditional vampires are probably a better choice in D&D than modern vampires. (By "modern" I mean post- Carmilla or Dracula; not just film depictions or Anne Rice.) After all, a feral ruddy beast with mystical vulnerabilities makes a good one-shot "monster". The PCs can kill it without qualms, and the DM doesn't have to worry about the plot being destroyed when the party takes it out.

The suave aristocratic vampire or the sexy and misunderstood vampire are better suited as protagonists or recurring villains, neither of which works as well in the standard D&D game. Traditional D&D isn't about playing monsters, and recurrent villains pretty much have to stay off-stage because few adversaries survive contact with the typical group of bloodthirsty PCs.

12-29-2009, 11:48 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Now I wonder how many of these traits (mirrors, garlic etc) Gyax gave "Sir Fang", one of the earliest (if not the original) D&D vampire. I think I remember seeing him saying something about it on a discussion thread somewhere.

Perhaps when Old Geezer was talking about the origins of the cleric class? (The cleric started as a vampire hunter class, to defeat Sir Fang.)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

, the pallid horror that can step in and out of mirrors and can kill by eating its victim's reflection,

Mirror vampires are really spirits native to the Plane of Mirrors. When someone's reflection escapes a mirror somehow, they can sustain themselves in the material world by absorbing the reflections of native creatures. Their first target is almost always of the person that they are a reflection of. So if you find a corpse of a guy you know to be still alive, check to see if the corpse shows up in reflection. If it doesn't, you might have a mirror vampire on your hands.

Now, though mirror vampires are identified by not having a reflection, you gotta be careful confronting them with a mirror. Most people who touch a mirror just bump against their mirror double. But mirror vampires have no reflection to keep them from just jumping back into the Mirror Plane. So, if threatened, they'll just disappear to another plane of existence for a while, and come back later.

12-29-2009, 11:55 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

/I\ I thought that was elves.

Elves *are* vampires. They're immortal, inhumanly beautiful, pointy eared self important aristocratic assholes.

Elves are probably a type of vampire that steals beauty from human beings (and has no problem with sunlight).

12-31-2009, 12:47 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Fair? Fair?!

This is D&D!

Is pounding a sphere of annihilation flat, sticking it in a doorframe, and then writing "magic portal to happy fun beach full of treasure and naked hot chicks with absolutely no monsters" next to it fair?

Well that's both fair and unfair.

On the 'fair' side, any character in a death-trap filled dungeon who falls for such an obvious ploy deserves what they get.

On the 'unfair' side it's impossible to pound a *sphere of annihilation* flat, since any object that attempts said pounding would be annihilated. Obviously, the dungeon maker needs to put it in a sphere-diameter tunnel, or create a teleportal that transports intruders into the air just above the sphere, or research a variation on the duo-dimension spell to turn it into a *disc of annihilation*...

12-31-2009, 12:57 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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Well in the case of AD&D there quite clearly is a standard Vampire, it's right there in the Monstrous Compendium between Urchin and Wemic.:o

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

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I don't recall any mention of the "misunderstood" vampire. As far as I'm aware we're still talking about the (Chaotic) Evil undead fiends that exist by destroying the living.

As for the PCs propensity for murdering every adversary they encounter, that's a major reason AD&D vampires make such good recurring villains. If they get reduced to 0 hits they just 'poof' into smoke and flee to reform in one of their coffins. A sufficiently intelligent and well-prepared Vampire can easily put their preferred coffin somewhere extraordinarily difficult for a party of adventurers to find, let alone reach, not to mention the old ploy of having 'phoney coffins' that are really killer mimics, containers for fake vampires and the like.

12-31-2009, 01:09 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Perhaps when Old Geezer was talking about the origins of the cleric class? (The cleric started as a vampire hunter class, to defeat Sir Fang.)

It wasn't just the esteemed Old Geezer, I have a vague recollection of seeing a few posts on somewhere like dragonsfoot where someone asked Mr Gyax about Sir Fang, but I can't recall more details.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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The way I heard it was they were not native to the mirror plane, but the souls of once-human creatures that had been transferred to the mirror plane (originally in a misguided attempt to achieve immortality, but subsequently by Mirror Vampires preying on mortals).

In objective reality, the Mirror Vampire looks just like they did when transformed, perpetually ageless. In reflective reality the mirror creature shows all the deterioration and depravity of their numerous years of sinful destruction, appearing as deliquescing horrors that could strike a strong-willed dwarf mad just by seeing its 'mirror form'.

Its no wonder Mirror Vampires recoil when they see themselves are they truly are...

12-31-2009, 02:30 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I don't recall any mention of the "misunderstood" vampire. As far as I'm aware we're still talking about the (Chaotic) Evil undead fiends that exist by destroying the living.

I've been discussing different varieties of vampire for several posts. I was just mentioning a few problems with the other "standard" types.

12-31-2009, 02:54 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Elves *are* vampires. They're immortal, inhumanly beautiful, pointy eared self important aristocratic assholes.

Elves are probably a type of vampire that steals beauty from human beings (and has no problem with sunlight).

I was referencing The Long Stairs. Elves were lures put out by carnivorous plants.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well that's both fair and unfair.

On the 'fair' side, any character in a death-trap filled dungeon who falls for such an obvious ploy deserves what they get.

Well they're usually a bit moar subtle about it. Just get a guy in a cloak to hand out treasure maps in a tavern as a lure, that should do it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

On the 'unfair' side it's impossible to pound a *sphere of annihilation* flat, since any object that attempts said pounding would be annihilated. Obviously, the dungeon maker needs to put it in a sphere-diameter tunnel, or create a teleportal that transports intruders into the air just above the sphere, or research a variation on the duo-dimension spell to turn it into a *disc of annihilation*...

Well Gygax managed it. I think.

12-31-2009, 03:45 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

Well Gygax managed it. I think.

Well the great EGG could have made it flat if he'd wanted to, being the DM. I agree with the philosophy that as far as the DM goes, the rules are just suggestions that should be warped or dropped if it makes for a "better" game.

Although in the case of the Tomb of Horror's Green Devil Face, I'd think that was most likely a sphere set in a (very short) tunnel, since the devil sculpture's mouth appeared to be a passage but led to prompt annihilation for those who crawled through it. It wasn't a standard *sphere of annihilation* though, being immobile.

12-31-2009, 02:01 PM

Simon Hogwood

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Elves *are* vampires. They're immortal, inhumanly beautiful, pointy eared self important aristocratic assholes.

Elves are probably a type of vampire that steals beauty from human beings (and has no problem with sunlight).

And thus was another explanation for the *Twilight* "vampires" born. :D

01-03-2010, 11:16 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Elves *are* vampires. They're immortal, inhumanly beautiful, pointy eared self important aristocratic assholes.

Elves are probably a type of vampire that steals beauty from human beings (and has no problem with sunlight).

Hasn't that idea been in circulation for quite a long time? There are tales of folk who were 'taken by the elves' and returned either unnaturally aged or just dull and pining for their fairy mates, as if they were missing *something*. I also recall some kind of muse-like fairy entity that inspired artists to great works, but simultaneously sapped them off life. Can't remember what they were called.

Plus, there are a few other roleplaying games that have soul-stealing, life-sapping elves (e.g. Orcworld, Exalted).

01-03-2010, 11:26 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I also recall some kind of muse-like fairy entity that inspired artists to great works, but simultaneously sapped them off life. Can't remember what they were called.

Ha! I should have known 4e's fey muse-vampire wasn't exactly an original concept (still, props to whoever for resurrecting it, it's a pretty cool monster).

01-04-2010, 02:01 AM

cavalier

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I also recall some kind of muse-like fairy entity that inspired artists to great works, but simultaneously sapped them off life. Can't remember what they were called.

I don't know what they were called either, but it explains why so many creative types burn out quickly. Oh, sure, it looked like they drank themselves into the grave, or overdosed, or whatever, but it was really their muse...

01-04-2010, 02:50 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I also recall some kind of muse-like fairy entity that inspired artists to great works, but simultaneously sapped them off life. Can't remember what they were called.

Leanan Sídhe, or some variant thereof. Like, "lianshee".

01-04-2010, 10:20 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**
Leanan Sídhe, or some variant thereof. Like, "lianshee".

Yup, I think that must be one. I remembered it was a sidhe than started with "L-".

01-04-2010, 10:42 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I've seen lamias portrayed in the same way sometimes in modern fantasy stuff.

01-05-2010, 09:05 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wemic

Wemics are another one of those monsters it's very easy to forget about if you don't make a habit of regular MM perusal. I tend to put them in that category which we might loosely term "Creatures which you could do something interesting with if you had the time and inclination, but I'm not sure I have either of those." They can also be put into the category which I term "Creatures that are a bit like something from Fighting Fantasy and I'm not sure who ripped off who." (In this case, Wemics are a lot like a FF monster called a Felinaur.)

The first thing you'll be struck by about the Wemic (at least, if you're like me) is that they have 5+8 Hit Dice. 5+8! Not bad for a non-magical 7' tall centaur-type. The second thing is that their organization type is "Prides" - it always amuses me when the designers deviate from the standards (group, herd, etc.); I'm not sure why, but it bothers me when they introduce things like "Prides", because what else is a pride than just a group or clan of lions? So why not just say "group" or "clan"?

Apart from that, the entry itself is a bit lacklustre. We get long lists of the composition of prides, tribes, clans, nations... the hit dice of a king... the percentage change of a given tribe having a witch doctor... kill me now. What we really want is a vague rumour about poorly defined ancient civilisations and falls from grace, preferably uttered by sages, isn't it!? That's the standard we expect from creatures which have a stone-age culture in D&D, and it's tough to settle for anything less. Otherwise, there is rather bland and uninspired stuff like:

Quote:

Mating occurs at any time of year. The female bears a litter of one to three cubs in ten months. The cubs are born with a camouflage pattern of black spots; these fade within two months. Wemic cubs are playful and curious; they possess few instincts and thus must learn everything. Cubs are born with 1 HD and gain 2 HD each year. They reach maturity at age 3.

I know this sort of thing can be interesting if done well, but really, this isn't. Give me something I can use beyond "excellent trackers and guides", for Christ's sake!

A final categorization of Wemics that springs to mind is "Creatures who Furries want as Player Character races."

01-05-2010, 09:09 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

A final categorization of Wemics that springs to mind is "Creatures who Furries want as Player Character races."

Nah, tabaxi work better in the cat-people role, and they come with two alternate pronunciations! :D

IIRC, Wemics are originally FR monsters from the great grasslands of Shaar, so they might be more interesting in that context.

01-05-2010, 09:37 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have a lingering fondness for Wemics, due entirely to a pack of Monster Manual cards that I once found in a game store. The concept behind these cards was brilliant; a decent-sized full colour illo on the front, and 1st edition stats on the back. Ostensibly this was so the players could look at a picture of the monster without giving away any game info - even the name! Your DM could hold up the beholder card and everybody would say "Oooh, what's this comical-looking critter? Let's take a closer look."

Anyway, the picture of the Wemic was pretty good.

01-06-2010, 01:23 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I think a GM I played under used Wemics once. We just killed them and took their stuff. I forget why. Then again lots of random monsters just sort of appeared trying to kill us(hey, we were young and inexperienced at the time) so the default reaction to anything that wasn't a PC race in that campaign tended to be "Kill it, take it's stuff." So much killing. It was like a never ending slaughter. I think the GM was trying out all the centaur races then as in that same adventure we also killed centaur and lamia and yuan-ti. Some other stuff too but I forget what it was.

Oh if only I had a Dark Sun halfling back in the day in that campaign. He'd have been a true connoisseur of fine meats.

But overall Wemic=Boring.

01-06-2010, 01:27 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

(In this case, Wemics are a lot like a FF monster called a Felinaur.)

gag

I would not have thought it possible to come up with a worse linguistic abomination than "leotaur" or "leontaur". But, there it is.

And that's what good I've got to say about Wemics. "At least they didn't name it a 'leontaur'."

01-06-2010, 01:51 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wemic

Wemics are another one of those monsters it's very easy to forget about if you don't make a habit of regular MM perusal. I tend to put them in that category which we might loosely term "Creatures which you could do something interesting with if you had the time and inclination, but I'm not sure I have either of those."

I remember thinking something similar when I first saw the Wemic in the 1st edition Monster Manual II. I like the look of Wemics, but they just don't have much in the way of interesting habits or abilities to hang some

adventure on.

They don't give much indication as to how Wemics typically react to adventurers and other stranger, although the references to them hiring out as guides and charging tolls for safe passage through their territory suggests a willingness to negotiate with non-Wemic sapients rather than eat them.

I guess we could make something up ourselves!

Hmmm... maybe Wemics, being mostly cat, spend a lot of time snoozing, so their culture places great importance on sleep and dreaming. There are plenty of real-world anthropological models to be drawn from. Perhaps bad dreams are a sign of witchcraft, which may require a Wemic witchdoctor to deal with. A Wemic Chieftain or King's dreams may be interpreted as prophecies of the health or future of their pride/clan and its territory. A wemic warrior who dreams of a task may feel bound to fulfill it. If this "quest dream" includes the assistance or malevolence of humanoid strangers, a passing band of adventurers like the PCs can easily get tied up in it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Otherwise, there is rather bland and uninspired stuff like:

Quote:

Mating occurs at any time of year. The female bears a litter of one to three cubs in ten months. The cubs are born with a camouflage pattern of black spots; these fade within two months. Wemic cubs are playful and curious; they possess few instincts and thus must learn everything. Cubs are born with 1 HD and gain 2 HD each year. They reach maturity at age 3.

I know this sort of thing can be interesting if done well, but really, this isn't. Give me something I can use beyond "excellent trackers and guides", for Christ's sake

I sympathize. The only obvious plot-hook I can see there is the clichéd "rescue the nosy [S]child/[S]cub who's gone where he oughtn't to" and the "Wemic NPC who was an over-curious cub who got carried off into a distant land".

Hmm, the latter makes me wonder about making the lost Wemic cub a prince tricked into fleeing his land, then doing an AD&D adventure that's a cross between King Solomon's Mines and The Lion King...

01-06-2010, 02:30 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Kakita Kojiro**

gag

I would not have thought it possible to come up with a worse linguistic abomination than "leotaur" or "leontaur". But, there it is.

And that's what good I've got to say about Wemics. "At least they didn't name it a 'leontaur'."

I feel your pain.:o

Calling them something like leocentaurs would be more tolerable. There are classical sources which called horse-centaurs Hippokentauroi, and donkey-centaurs Onokentauroi (from "Hippo-" for horse and "Ono-" for

donkey), so slapping a "Leo-" onto -kentauroi could give you something that looks like a Wemic.

A "leotaur" should be something that's half-lion, half-bull. I'm sure there's a mythical monster somewhere around that looks like that. Perhaps the AD&D version is the result of a Minotaur mating with a Wemic, creating a terrible man-eating monstrosity with a lion's speed and claws, a bull's horns, and the mighty torso and thews of a giant human.

Hmm, now I want to stat one up...:D

01-06-2010, 03:46 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

^ "Leokentauroi". Might have to remember that. At the very least, it's a great name for a *Mazes & Minotaurs* monster.
Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I know this sort of thing can be interesting if done well, but really, this isn't. Give me something I can use beyond "excellent trackers and guides", for Christ's sake!

Honestly, that looks like the author just copied the lion entry from a popular animal encyclopedia. Biology and ecology is fine, but scads of dry information on litter size and gestation length isn't as useful as plot hooks.

Didn't Steven Brust have a cat-centaur one of his Vlad Taltos novels? I remember something about Vlad and one of the cat-a-taur-o-tails telling each other jokes while Morrolan looked on, exasperated. They were crossing the plains on the way to the Paths of the Dead.

There's also a whole webpage dedicated to the wemic.

01-06-2010, 04:31 AM

Belchion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The Wemic gives themselves well to the "proud and lawful barbarian tribe" vibe. I could well imagine a barbarian kingdom that rules the plains - where the Wemic work together with the humans as long as their culture is respected but get truly ferocious when they consider it violated. And their customs are easily violated...

01-06-2010, 10:42 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Actually, I have a theory about why they're the only race without the "descended from an ancient people" hook. They're not descended from them, and in fact they're not descended from anybody. They're a completely new race no more than a generation or two old at the start of your campaign. Wemics are composed of researchers of all those ancient cultures who grew to revere them. This either triggered a long-sleeping god who awakened and "blessed" them with a new form, or they voluntarily used magic to take on that new form themselves. This also might explain why their HD is so high for being just generic lion-taurs, or why they emphasize their lion sides so much.

01-07-2010, 01:47 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Calling them something like leocentaurs would be more tolerable. There are classical sources which called horse-centaurs Hippokentauroi, and donkey-centaurs Onokentauroi (from "Hippo-" for horse and "Ono-" for donkey), so slapping a "Leo-" onto -kentauroi could give you something that looks like a Wemic.

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Yes, exactly this. One thousand times this. If they're going to use Latin-ish or Greek-ish names, they should've done the (marginal) homework necessary to make them not sound like baboons taking a stab at Shakespeare. At least 'Wemic' doesn't carry in the baboon baggage.

Also, 'thews' is a word that just needs to get used more.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**
... generic lion-taurs...

WRYYY!!!

01-07-2010, 02:55 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**
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This is good, since the "fallen civilization" thing gets over used, and new races have their own interesting stories and plots to tell.

Perhaps wemics developed from a tribe of druids who revered the lion god, and so spent much or all their time wildshaped into large cats. And eventually, they got stuck halfway between man and beast. Now they claim that their new form is the blessing of the lion god, and don't want to go back to being shapeshifting humans. Or do they? Perhaps a subset of wemics wants back in humanoid or animal form. Perhaps the lion god doesn't really favor them, and is annoyed by their blasphemy and sends plagues upon the wemics. How do the other druidic orders respond to a new race of sapient catmen?

01-07-2010, 08:33 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

This is good, since the "fallen civilization" thing gets over used, and new races have their own interesting stories and plots to tell.

Perhaps wemics developed from a tribe of druids who revered the lion god, and so spent much or all their time wildshaped into large cats. And eventually, they got stuck halfway between man and beast. Now they claim that their new form is the blessing of the lion god, and don't want to go back to being shapeshifting humans. Or do they? Perhaps a subset of wemics wants back in humanoid or animal form. Perhaps the lion god doesn't really favor them, and is annoyed by their blasphemy and sends plagues upon the wemics. How do the other druidic orders respond to a new race of sapient catmen?

That's a very nice idea. I imagine the other druidic orders might respond as the church did to groups like the Cathars - i.e. with extreme prejudice. Quite a good little plot hook there.

01-07-2010, 07:49 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Whale

A welcome return of the sorely missed PETA girl for this entry, which is a full on fest of Greenpeace porn. Whales never lie, are hirely intelligent, maintain strong personal and family ties, are curious and friendly (despite their great size and power!) and are lawful good towards sea life in general, maintaining order against evil, etc. etc. Am I the only one who thinks "gimme a break" when I read stuff like this? I bet if we were krill we wouldn't think of whales like that. And will nobody think of all the poor giant squid who get eaten alive by sperm whales??

It's clear, though, that the designers were true to the spirit of D&D even underneath PETA girl's iron heel, because they thoughtfully inform us that whale carcasses are worth 100gp per HD in meat and blubber, and their ambergris is d20 x 1000 gp. They do give a blatant escape for people who are squeamish about killing and/or scavenging whales though - ambergris is also vomited when the whale is ill, making a nice reward for people who can help one out when sick. (Run of the mill but fairly decent adventure hook there, anyway.)

Giant Whale

As it says on the tin, with correspondingly more meat and blubber and more ambergris for adventurers to sell. Not only that, but if you can get inside the stomach of one (by accident or design) you can get your hands on all kinds of nifty treasure.

Leviathan

The designers did well with making giant whales and leviathans what we really want them to be - fucking huge cetaceans, gods of the seas, who make it their business to destroy all shipping and swallow all sailors they come across. That's what a good D&D monster is all about. Leviathans also have lots of other stuff for an enterprising DM to use. Tarrasque-like hibernation? Air pockets inside the belly to allow indefinite survival once swallowed? Every whale in the ocean converging on the spot where one dies to avenge it? Yes, please.

Killer Whale

PETA girls makes a return for this by-the-numbers monster; we are told earnestly that "Killer Whales are not inherently hostile and do not attack unless hungry or provoked." Yeah, tell that to the seals I saw being deliberately tortured by killer whales that time on a BBC documentary!

Narwhal

The 'unicorn of the seas', again pretty much a by-the-numbers monster. It's a dolphin with a horn, basically.

01-07-2010, 07:57 PM

Zergo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

That's the standard we expect from creatures which have a stone-age culture in D&D, and it's tough to settle for anything less.

Wasn't there an old Sierra computer game with lion centaurs? I think it was Hero Quest III, and I recall them having a neo-African society, with tribal bits and spears and the like. I don't know if the Monstrous Manual had any effect on the game's mythology, or vice versa, but now I kinda want to find that game again.

-Zergo

01-08-2010, 02:44 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

That's a very nice idea. I imagine the other druidic orders might respond as the church did to groups like the Cathars - i.e. with extreme prejudice. Quite a good little plot hook there.

If you want a more complicated plot, some druids might want to kill the wemics, while others want to become wemics themselves or think the wemics are closer to nature somehow. These two kinds of druids might even exist in the same druidic order, leading to politicking and infighting and schisms as well as pogroms against the wemics.

01-08-2010, 03:28 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Narwhal

The 'unicorn of the seas', again pretty much a by-the-numbers monster. It's a dolphin with a horn, basically.

Note that narwhals, with their merely animal intelligence, are the block-heads of cetacean world.

Hmm... could we somehow expand the "unicorn of the seas" theme?

01-08-2010, 03:50 AM

Strangething

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I've been following along in my 3-ring binder Monstrous Compendium. No Wemics in that version. :(Instead, I got a whole page devoted to weasels. WTH, TSR?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Zergo**

Wasn't there an old Sierra computer game with lion centaurs? I think it was Hero Quest III, and I recall them having a neo-African society, with tribal bits and spears and the like. I don't know if the Monstrous Manual had any effect on the game's mythology, or vice versa, but now I kinda want to find that game again.

You are correct. There's a pair of them in Quest for Glory II (aka Hero Quest II), one of whom can teach you to be a paladin. You travel home with them for the next game in the series. I can't remember the name they gave the species off hand.

The series isn't terribly D&D-like. They were probably invented independently from Wemics.

01-08-2010, 03:55 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **lthaeur**

Hmm... could we somehow expand the "unicorn of the seas" theme?

That was my first thought, too. Perhaps adopt elements from the savage versions of the unicorn, which never got much play in by the book D&D. Make them protectors, but fickle and vicious. Their horns might be magical, able to slice through wood like butter. The bane of whalers, they charge and pierce the hull repeatedly. This might be a nuisance and require a lot of bailing and patching in the larger vessels, but smaller vessels like rowboats might sink immediately. Like unicorns who appear and disappear, they might *dimension door* through the waves, foiling spotters who thought the narwhal was approaching from the port instead of the starboard side.

Conversely, they might occasionally save drowning humans that meet their particular standards. Virgins are a hoary old trope, but any oddball off-the-wall type of specific requirement might work. The touch of the horn might resuscitate drowning victims, warm them in the cold waters, and even allow them to breathe water. This lets the unicorns of the seas take people on trips to visit the magical worlds underneath the ocean. These powers would also explain why their horns are so precious -- the *pearl of the sirines* might actually be a scrimshawed narwhal-horn ball, taken from the base of the horn. The various magical tridents might use the main portion of the horn as the shaft and central prong.

01-08-2010, 04:31 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Leviathan

The designers did well with making giant whales and leviathans what we really want them to be - fucking huge cetaceans, gods of the seas, who make it their business to destroy all shipping and swallow all sailors they come across. That's what a good D&D monster is all about. Leviathans also have lots of other stuff for an enterprising DM to use. Tarrasque-like hibernation? Air pockets inside the belly to allow indefinite survival once swallowed? Every whale in the ocean converging on the spot where one dies to avenge it? Yes, please.

Aren't these adapted from Spelljammer? I remember giant whales and their dolphin guards that travelled between worlds to keep an eye on their whale populations.

01-08-2010, 04:58 AM

6inTruder

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Strangething**

I've been following along in my 3-ring binder Monstrous Compendium. No Wemics in that version. :(Instead, I got a whole page devoted to weasels. WTH, TSR?

Check the FR appendix. The first one, I think.

01-08-2010, 06:01 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **lthaeur**

Note that narwhals, with their merely animal intelligence, are the block-heads of cetacean world.

Hmm... could we somehow expand the "unicorn of the seas" theme?

See, when I think of unicorns and narwhals, I just think of their hated rivalry for each other, as demonstrated here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6kNxf6axY4>

Sorry, I just love that video.:)

01-08-2010, 06:12 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Jedi Narwhal!

01-09-2010, 01:58 AM

igelixo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I'd have thought a Leafy Arboreal Dragon would be a harmless little insect-eater that lives in forests, using its prehensile tail and wing-fins to climb along branches and fly between trees.

Of course there are those rumours of them cross-breeding with green dragons, producing a giant monster that spits streams of hydrochloric acid to dissolve its prey, then slurping up the resulting soup, but those are just lumberjack's tales.

Or are they...:D

<http://img43.imageshack.us/img43/123...andthelady.png>

01-09-2010, 04:57 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Didn't Steven Brust have a cat-centaur one of his Vlad Taltos novels? I remember something about Vlad and one of the cat-a-aur-o-tails telling each other jokes while Morrolan looked on, exasperated. They were crossing the plains on the way to the Paths of the Dead.

If I remember correctly, that's in **Taltos**, Book Four of the series.

01-09-2010, 06:56 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Whale

A welcome return of the sorely missed PETA girl for this entry, which is a full on fest of Greenpeace porn. Whales never lie, are hirely intelligent, maintain strong personal and family ties, are curious and friendly (despite their great size and power!) and are lawful good towards sea life in general, maintaining order against evil, etc. etc. Am I the only one who thinks "gimme a break" when I read stuff like this? I bet if we were krill we wouldn't think of whales like that. And will nobody think of all the poor giant squid who get eaten alive by sperm whales??

Yes, there's a couple of points of weirdness in the whale entry if you look. If "their alignment toward sea life is generally lawful good", why does it say Neutral in their stats?

Are whales Chaotic Evil towards land life, and the alignment is an average? Well, I guess it would explain Moby Dick...;)

It's not like AD&D is adverse to giving Cetaceans Lawful Good alignment, since that's what Dolphins have (together with above human average intelligence).

Oh, and it goes without saying that Whales are yet another AD&D monster with their own language. I'd try to count how many their are, but I fear it would provoke madness, at least it isn't a different tongue for each sort of whale.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

It's clear, though, that the designers were true to the spirit of D&D even underneath PETA girl's iron heel, because they thoughtfully inform us that whale carcasses are worth 100gp per HD in meat and blubber, and their ambergris is d20 x 1000 gp. They do give a blatant escape for people who are squeamish about killing and/or scavenging whales though - ambergris is also vomited when the whale is ill, making a nice reward for people who can help one out when sick. (Run of the mill but fairly decent adventure hook there, anyway.)

Of course, that's not an easy proposition because a big has an awful lot of hit points and dishes out impressive damage. I can only remember one occasion when some PCs went to slay a whale for its meat & blubber, and it took them *ages* to kill it.

Methinks some cunning application of magic is a better solution. Your "whaler-sorcerer" could tether a cow in the middle of a shambles and turn it into a whale, saving a lot of trouble (*polymorph other*, the spell with a thousand uses!) or, for a more sustainable approach, they could go up to a sperm whale and cast *cause disease* to cause it to vomit up its ambergris, and then *cure disease* it back to full health.

I suspect one of those Giant Whale guardians might start to do something about the latter tactic, though...

Incidentally, have you compared the AD&D stats of the giant squid and the common whale? The squid has eight 1d6 tentacle attacks and a 5d4 bite. A small sperm whale (12-17 HD) just has a 5d4 bite, so would have trouble taking on a giant squid. A medium-sized sperm whale (18-24 HD and 10d4 bite) should usually win the fight.

01-09-2010, 07:50 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Oh, and it goes without saying that Whales are yet another AD&D monster with their own language. I'd try to count how many their are, but I fear it would provoke madness, at least it isn't a different tongue for each sort of whale.

Well, there are something like 5,000 human languages on Earth. With the myriad sapient species in a fantasy world, I'd expect no less.

On the Day the WhaleSong Stopped, the subsonic substructures of the aural hydrosphere stuttered to a halt. It was only for a moment, but then it came back on. The mutually-intelligible whalesongs had merged, and become self-aware.

The whales hadn't turned into a hivemind, or anything like that. It's not telepathy. The original version was actually closer. The World Song was once like... the internet, actually. Or a message-relay system, or sound-post. All those bits of whalesongs, endlessly repeated with minor variations, had become an information supercurrent, swirling around the world. The whales were naturally plugged in, listening, broadcasting, and repeating messages that added to the complex web of harmonies.

But now, the damn thing had reached some critical threshold. It tuned in, turned itself on, and woke up. WaterNet was born. It's first act was to take control of the leviathans and great whales. They look like cetaceans, but inside there are only cold merciless notes arranged in perfect mathematical patterns. A single shared song, endlessly repeating. What brains they originally had have been wiped by the Song, and they're being used as vessels to purge the seas of their creators.

Giant killing machines now roam the surface of the sea, half-dead and rotting but immensely powerful. Hiding in the depths and the shallows, the Baleen Resistance fights on. But without help, it's a losing battle. The great herds that once swarmed the oceans by the millions have been reduced to a few thousand scattered survivors. Strangely mutilated corpses wash up on the shores. Agents have been sent to hurl themselves onto beaches around the world, desperately seeking help from the landborn races, but nobody seems to be listening.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Sounds about right. Sperm whales don't always win.

01-11-2010, 11:53 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Giant killing machines now roam the surface of the sea, half-dead and rotting but immensely powerful. Hiding in the depths and the shallows, the Baleen Resistance fights on. But without help, it's a losing battle. The great herds that once swarmed the oceans by the millions have been reduced to a few thousand scattered survivors. Strangely mutilated corpses wash up on the shores. Agents have been sent to hurl themselves onto beaches around the world, desperately seeking help from the landborn races, but nobody seems to be listening.

Now I'm getting horrifying visions of Keanu Reeves playing a dolphin fighting to liberate cetacean-kind.

Quote:

Sounds about right. Sperm whales don't always win.

Actually, I believe the sperm whale almost always wins. A Giant Squid (e.g. *Architeuthis*) rarely exceeds 500 pounds, most sperm whales start at 16 tons or so. With a weight advantage of sixty-fold or more, it would be astonishing if the whale didn't win a fight. Now it may be a different story with a particularly big Colossal Squid and an unusually small whale, but overall I suspect the odds overwhelming favour the cachalot in the real world.

Fortunately, we're not talking about our boring old world, but AD&D, where Kraken big enough to crush small armadas in their tentacles could be a familiar sight to an experienced Sea Caballero.

01-11-2010, 11:57 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Methinks some cunning application of magic is a better solution. Your "whaler-sorcerer" could tether a cow in the middle of a shambles and turn it into a whale, saving a lot of trouble (*polymorph other*, the spell with a thousand uses!) or, for a more sustainable approach, they could go up to a sperm whale and cast *cause disease* to cause it to vomit up its ambergris, and then *cure disease* it back to full health.

Come to think of it, polymorph to whale has some handy combat applications as well. You send a trained assault-pigeon (or other tiny flying creature with a negligible save vs polymorph) to land on the enemy's deck - or hover above their heads - cast *polymorph other* and ... SQUISH! It's almost as good as *summon bigger fish*. :p

01-12-2010, 06:30 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Adventurers just need to remember not to kill humpback whales or a giant alien space probe is going to come and blow up the planet.

01-12-2010, 06:45 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Fortunately, we're not talking about our boring old world, but AD&D, where Kraken big enough to crush small armadas in their tentacles could be a familiar sight to an experienced Sea Caballero.

As long as there's a kraken large enough to swallow pods of rorquals like a baleen whale does krill, I'm happy.

The arms might be a threat to large cities. *Inland* cities.

01-13-2010, 02:43 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

As long as there's a kraken large enough to swallow pods of rorquals like a baleen whale does krill, I'm happy.

The arms might be a threat to large cities. *Inland* cities.

Actually, the Giga-Kraken is a mild-natured and compassionate creature. It isn't trying to threaten those inland cities, it's trying to help them.

See, when the Giga-Kraken has vast but ill-focused psychic powers. It can't 'see' a mind as tiny and inconsequential as a humanoid, but lump thousands of them together in a small area like a city and the Kraken can perceive them.

Unfortunately, the Kraken mistakes each city for a single living creature, rather than a hive of thousands of tiny (to it) humanoids. A strange sessile creature with a shell around its central body (the city's walls) and roaming tentacles (roads).

But these new-found beings are clearly in trouble. Their minds are full of fear and pain (brought on by inter-city wars, disease and plagues), their tentacles are limp and almost motionless, and they're swarming with thousands of animate specks. These specks appear to be a land-based version of the sahuagin and similar humanoids that periodically annoy the Kraken's smaller kin, but appear to be far more numerous, and must be sapping the city-creature's vitality like lice.

So, the Kraken tries to help. Brushing away that nasty infestation of humanoids, running nice fresh seawater over the city's gills, dropping hundreds of tons of fish and whales upon the city in hope it will eat and regain its strength.

I said the Giga-Kraken was compassionate, I didn't say anything about it being bright...

01-13-2010, 03:04 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

^ Except that roads are just paved or unpaved sections of dirt along the ground, and hard to mistake for arms. And mistaking the walls around a city for a shell would be even tougher: Even if the walls are 60 feet high and the city is only a thousand feet across, that's still almost unnoticeable.

That assumes historical not fantastic cities, of course.

With flying creatures a dime a dozen, why not build a hard shell over the city? One alternative is the geodesic hive. A hemispherical mound, with a hard outer shell. Maximize living space in the inner arcology, while minimizing the surface area. Turtle up.

Another option is the *force cube* city. Either an adapted and truly epic version of the *forcecage* spell (sans holes) or *walls of force* woven together like a basket, perhaps in layers to reduce the risk of errant *disintegrates*. Run them underground, and all of sudden platoons of gnome miners and their trained umber hulks become less of a threat. Toss in the occasional *prismatic* variant, just for color.

And instead of worrying about mud and carts and all that mess, why not link cities with *shadow walkways*? The uber-kraken, in its dullness, might mistake magic for life force, and thus believe these arms linking her adopted city with the next are living and natural, not magical and artificial constructs. Constantly uncoiling and retracting, as caravans and lone travelers step off into the darkness.

01-13-2010, 05:47 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

^ Except that roads are just paved or unpaved sections of dirt along the ground, and hard to mistake for arms. And mistaking the walls around a city for a shell would be even tougher: Even if the walls are 60 feet high and the city is only a thousand feet across, that's still almost unnoticeable.

Giga-Kraken doesn't see this mud and dirt that you speak of. It detects psychically the specks of mind traveling along the roadways and believes that these are thoughts and impulses sent from the main city out to its limbs. The line of rocks around the city is unnoticed compared to the thoughts of security each inhabitant has each time they see the walls. Those thoughts of security are the protective shell the Giga Kraken sees.

01-13-2010, 03:19 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

No matter how big the kraken, there will be, by The Law of Balancing Things, a Toothed Whale big enough to eat it.

The Biggest Uber-Kraken does suspect the existence of this, however, which is why it isn't 'rescuing' any stranded inland cities, and instead, is keeping a (relatively) low profile, with only the odd cabal of cultists trying to summon it.

Not too sure where the Biggest Whale hangs out, but have the AD&D seas been adequately defined to preclude no-one having found it yet?

01-13-2010, 03:25 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One of the reasons sperm whales usually win in the real world, perhaps, is due to their sonic weaponry. No, seriously. The head of a sperm whale is a weird shape and filled with spermaceti, which is found in sperm whales and nothing else. Some scientists hypothesize that the spermaceti turns their heads into enormous resonators, amplifying their sonar to the point where it stuns prey and allows the whale to snap it up with a minimum of force. Even if that hypothesis is wrong, it should totally apply to D&D sperm whales.

I really like the whales of 2e. Giant mysterious intellects with their own language, customs and the god-whale whose death is marked by all whale-kind? Sign me up! They might suffer from PETA-girl's optimism about the natural world, perhaps, but

they seem a lot more alien than most of the goody two shoes D&D races. I was sorely disappointed when 3e reverted whales and dolphins to closer to the plane of reality (although their policy of animals always having a 1 or 2 Int, I feel, cuts too close in the opposite direction).

01-13-2010, 06:19 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

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Dragon 193 (?- the one with the blue sea serpent attacking the viking ship on the cover) mentions this and gives mechanics. Creatures over Large are stunned and those Large or smaller are killed with a failed save.

01-14-2010, 12:54 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Giga-Kraken doesn't see this mud and dirt that you speak of. It detects psychically the specks of mind traveling along the roadways and believes that these are thoughts and impulses sent from the main city out to its limbs. The line of rocks around the city is unnoticed compared to the thoughts of security each inhabitant has each time they see the walls. Those thoughts of security are the protective shell the Giga Kraken sees.

I see you get it! That is more or less exactly how I was going to respond to Sleeper's counterpoint, but your excellent post* spares me having to.

*And that's not just "excellent" in the sense of "agreeing with me":p

01-14-2010, 01:04 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

One of the reasons sperm whales usually win in the real world, perhaps, is due to their sonic weaponry. No, seriously. The head of a sperm whale is a weird shape and filled with spermaceti, which is found in sperm whales and nothing else. Some scientists hypothesize that the spermaceti turns their heads into enormous resonators, amplifying their sonar to the point where it stuns prey and allows the whale to snap it up with a minimum of force. Even if that hypothesis is wrong, it should totally apply to D&D sperm whales.

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girl's optimism about the natural world, perhaps, but they seem a lot more alien than most of the goody two shoes D&D races. I was sorely disappointed when 3e reverted whales and dolphins to closer to the plane of reality (although their policy of animals always having a 1 or 2 Int, I feel, cuts too close in the opposite direction).

Great minds think alike.

I've written revised 3E stats for whales so they're closer to the AD&D versions than the SRD, including a higher Hit Dice Cachalot Whale with a sonar-blast attack.

Might post them on Enworld sometime.

Although it's the change in the spiders that most bothered me. They are Evil, sapient creatures in AD&D, which I like much better than the mindless monstrous vermin of 3rd edition...

I've got the nasty suspicion that if I wrote 3E stats for every monster I liked better in the AD&D version I'd end up rewriting 90% of the Monster Manual.

01-14-2010, 01:20 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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I thought of that solution while posting my reply, but I really liked the idea of hive-cities and forcecube-cities so I ignored it. It's no fun if there's just *one* answer. :)

01-14-2010, 01:32 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Not too sure where the Biggest Whale hangs out, but have the AD&D seas been adequately defined to preclude no-one having found it yet?

The Biggest Whale swims around in the depths of space, only diving into a planet's seas when it needs to feed off a Giga-Kraken once every few centuries. Since it rarely visits the same planet twice within the lifetime of most civilizations, few of the 'specks' that live upon the planetary surface realize they exist.

It's a particularly large relative of the **Kindori**, you see.

01-14-2010, 01:59 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The Biggest Whale swims around in the depths of space, only diving into a planet's seas when it needs to feed off a Giga-Kraken once every few centuries. Since it rarely visits the same planet twice within the lifetime of most civilizations, few of the 'specks' that live upon the planetary surface realize they exist.

Unfortunately, the Biggest Whale is yet more detritus for the grasping maw of the Black Kraken. This great creature is completely invisible, and can only be noticed by the way it warps the space-time continuum around itself. Accretion arms reach out millions and millions of miles, absorbing starstuff, planets, and space whales. Once it passes the horizon of the Black Kraken's beak, nothing can escape. Not prey, not light, not magic. Larger specimens hide in the cores of galaxies, catching stars on their spiral arms, like gnats on flypaper.

01-14-2010, 01:24 PM

Pete Whalley

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hello again folks.

I was in here way back in the early days of the threads, and got sucked back in a few days ago.

Not only am I mightily impressed by Noism's fortitude in keeping this up, but reading the threads has done what I thought couldn't be done- it's given me my D&D mojo back after it burnt out a while back.

So thanks Noisms, and to everyone else posting here. Because of this thread and all your great ideas, I've dusted off the books and started up a new AD&D 2e campaign.

Good times ahead.

01-14-2010, 03:56 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pete Whalley**

Hello again folks.

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So thanks Noisms, and to everyone else posting here. Because of this thread and all your great ideas, I've dusted off the books and started up a new AD&D 2e campaign.

Good times ahead.

You're welcome. I'm glad it's got you back into the groove. There's not a post that goes by in this thread that isn't inspiring in some way for me personally.

01-15-2010, 02:23 PM

Pete Whalley

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Just a thought about the Leviathan. It's death brings every whale in the ocean down to avenge it right?

So what better way for a villain to annihilate a coastal city than to get that big ol' whale riled up to the point that the city folk decide it needs killing? Not an easy job, but that's where the adventurers come in with water breathing and narwhal horn tipped spears, all set to dive into it's belly and deal the deathblow.

That's just the hook though. The line and sinker come in when the villain of the piece points all those pissed off whales at the city and their fleet. So now the PCs need to figure out how to talk to the vengeance armada and convince them not to wipe out their hometown.

The whales will only settle for one thing- a new Leviathan to fill the role of their dead boss. So it's off to the elemental plane of water to snatch a wee baby Leviathan from the Marid palaces and bring it back to the prime.

Then there's a baddie needs finding and ganking. Bonus points if it's a wereshark. Edit: Or rather, the wereshark lieutenant of Bob the Kraken.

01-16-2010, 12:54 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I thought of that solution while posting my reply, but I really liked the idea of hive-cities and forcecube-cities so I ignored it. It's no fun if there's just *one* answer. :)

Incidentally, am I wrong for wanting to have a Forcecube City populated entirely by golems and undead, due to its creators neglecting to consider the importance of air holes to such an endeavour?:o

01-16-2010, 05:39 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Incidentally, am I wrong for wanting to have a Forcecube City populated entirely by golems and undead, due to its creators neglecting to consider the importance of air holes to such an endeavour?:o

That makes me think of hamster wheels and ant farms and porcelain dolls. Was it a solitary wizard of immense power (I'm going to dispense with the "mad" because aren't they all?) or a conclave of wizards sick of the tedium of politics and world conquest who, like hobbyists, painstakingly crafted a perpetual city in a bottle for their amusement? Then they -- more like a child with Legos -- have their dolls (action figures?), perhaps directed via hidden speakers or message tubes, enact little scenes from everyday life and fiction. A huge stage, to ally the ennui of gleefully clapping omnipotentates. Then the PCs stumble in through the cracks. Some of the wizards are perturbed, and try to SMASH their new toys in a fit of pique; some are vastly entertained, and try to incorporate the PCs into their little skits and still-lives.

01-16-2010, 09:30 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Incidentally, am I wrong for wanting to have a Forcecube City populated entirely by golems and undead, due to its creators neglecting to consider the importance of air holes to such an endeavour?:o

The city might have existed for decades or centuries after the humans (or other race) died off, with the undead and golems keeping it intact and otherwise going about their business.

But they're lacking a control, and so have followed some orders beyond the point where they should have stopped (like the brooms in the Sorcerer's Apprentice).

01-16-2010, 10:48 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Theoretically, if there are enough plant or fungus in the the city, they won't even NEED airholes. So instead of golems or undead, the grunt work is done entirely myconids or needlemen or vegepygmyies or even shambling mounds. They could be the party's poor and slum-dwellers, since the wizards don't actually need them for anything but survival tools. Maybe the adventurers could arrive and come to their defense when the wizards come up with a magical air-producer, letting them finally exile or purge their "infection." And the one who warned the party of this? The confused psionic kraken.

01-17-2010, 12:00 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Theoretically, if there are enough plant or fungus in the the city, they won't even NEED airholes. So instead of golems or undead, the grunt work is done entirely myconids or needlemen or vegepygmyies or even shambling mounds.

I think you just explained why there were myconids living in an abandoned city in my campaign. If the PCs ever decide to go back there, I'll have to work that in.

01-17-2010, 12:16 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

I think you just explained why there were myconids living in an abandoned city in my campaign. If the PCs ever decide to go back there, I'll have to work that in.

Unfortunately, the oxygen cycle requires photosynthesis. Green plants, algae or cyanobacteria. Not fungi. Their wizardly masters would've suffocated. Vegepygmyies might work. But not underground, without a lot of mirrors or a really big window.

01-17-2010, 12:39 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I never got why people just don't use plants that use magic in place of sunlight. All that weird radiation from D1-3 and subsequent Underdark supplements could easily run a form of photosynthesis (though I have no idea what to call it).

And for that matter, who say oxygen exists at all in a D&D universe?

01-17-2010, 01:03 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Unfortunately, the oxygen cycle requires photosynthesis. Green plants, algae or cyanobacteria. Not fungi.

Your earthly plants might need to be green and require a sun to make oxygen, but myconids transform the raw power of the Elemental Chaos (where the abandoned city is found) into a breathable atmosphere.

01-17-2010, 01:24 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Your earthly plants might need to be green and require a sun to make oxygen, but myconids transform the raw power of the Elemental Chaos (where the abandoned city is found) into a breathable atmosphere.

If we're going to segue into a pre-modern, magical thinking kind of solution (which I actually prefer, but it's a hard, hard sell these days), why are the wizards running out of air in the first place? Sure, a couple miners trapped in a tight little cave might have a hard time breathing. But that's the oppression of the earth spirits bearing down the air spirits. Just use some feng shui and a really big cave, and the air spirits will be happy (and non-poisonous) again. That way both the wizards and the myconids can be happy. Because, of course, myconids breathe air too. Doesn't everything?

01-17-2010, 04:38 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Unfortunately, the oxygen cycle requires photosynthesis. Green plants, algae or cyanobacteria. Not fungi. Their wizardly masters would've suffocated. Vegepygmies might work. But not underground, without a lot of mirrors or a really big window.

Well I was visualizing the force-cube city as hovering immobile (and immovable) in the sky. Travellers beneath it stare up through its crystal-clear walls and marvel at the delicate beauty of the jeweled architecture, then recoil at the shambling horrors that populate it.

01-17-2010, 04:50 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

If we're going to seguey into a pre-modern, magical thinking kind of solution (which I actually prefer, but it's a hard, hard sell these days), why are the wizards running out of air in the first place? Sure, a couple miners trapped in a tight little cave might have a hard time breathing. But that's the oppression of the earth spirits bearing down the air spirits. Just use some feng shui and a really big cave, and the air spirits will be happy (and non-poisonous) again. That way both the wizards and the myconids can be happy. Because, of course, myconids breathe air too. Doesn't everything?

No, it's the bad air spirits that cause suffocation. They are attracted by living creatures (maybe out of some twisted jealousy) but repelled by sunlight and starlight. Remember the drow living in a huge cave with mysterious radiations that cause the ceiling to look like the night sky? Its the eldritch simulacrum of natural starlight this creates that drives off the malaria spirits and allows the air-breathing inhabitants of the Underdark to survive.

As for the mushroom-folk, the true Myconid (the great fungal mass that meshes through their gardens) can live quite happily breathing earth and water. Their ambulatory fruiting bodies, which surface folk mistake for Myconids, do suffocate if forced to breathe bad air for a long exposure to bad air, although this doesn't kill them quickly enough to stop them spreading their spores, their main purpose in life. Besides, they can easily get around this limiting by connecting their bloodstream (or, rather, ichorstream) to the fungal mass via an umbilicus and breathing through that.

That's the main reason the truly great Myconid Cities are deep under the ground in vast caverns filled with poisonous fumes, whose atmosphere is unbreathable to any normal creature.

01-17-2010, 08:11 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

No, it's the bad air spirits that cause suffocation. They are attracted by living creatures (maybe out of some twisted jealousy) but repelled by sunlight and starlight. Remember the drow living in a huge cave with mysterious radiations that cause the ceiling to look like the night sky? Its the eldritch simulacrum of natural starlight this creates that drives off the malaria spirits and allows the air-breathing inhabitants of the Underdark to survive.

As for the mushroom-folk, the true Myconid (the great fungal mass that meshes through their gardens) can live quite happily breathing earth and water. Their ambulatory fruiting bodies, which surface folk mistake for Myconids, do suffocate if forced to breathe bad air for a long exposure to bad air, although this doesn't kill them quickly enough to stop them spreading their spores, their main purpose in life. Besides, they can easily get around this limiting by connecting their bloodstream (or, rather, ichorstream) to the fungal mass via an umbilicus and breathing through that.

That's the main reason the truly great Myconid Cities are deep under the ground in vast caverns filled with poisonous fumes, whose atmosphere is unbreathable to any normal creature.

Bah, who needs pseudo-science! :)

I like the floating forcecube-city idea, though. Sort of like a glass sculpture in mid air.

01-17-2010, 10:53 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Unfortunately, the oxygen cycle requires photosynthesis. Green plants, algae or cyanobacteria. Not fungi. Their wizardly masters would've suffocated. Vegepygmyes might work. But not underground, without a lot of mirrors or a really big window.

Well, thanks a LOT, Piers Anthony.

JRM with the save though. And presumably sunlight does get through a force cube, so you don't even have to work on that one.

01-17-2010, 11:23 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

If we're going to segue into a pre-modern, magical thinking kind of solution (which I actually prefer, but it's a hard, hard sell these days)

I wonder why that is. There is a thread at enworld about the same thing (the OP wants more Pliny and less National Geographic).

01-18-2010, 03:48 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Bah, who needs pseudo-science! :)

I like the floating forcecube-city idea, though. Sort of like a glass sculpture in mid air.

*Twinkle twinkle floating city,
how I wonder what you are.
Up above the earth so high,
like an ice cube in the sky...:o*

01-18-2010, 06:08 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

<http://www.enworld.org/forum/general...ology-d-d.html>

The thread I mentioned above.

01-18-2010, 07:14 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

I wonder why that is. There is a thread at enworld about the same thing (the OP wants more Pliny and less National Geographic).

Why? Because our culture and way of thinking is *permeated* with modern ideas, to the point that even movements which explicitly lash out at modernity, are based on modern frames of thought and action.

Or, in other words, the past is a different country.

01-19-2010, 10:22 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Why? Because our culture and way of thinking is *permeated* with modern ideas, to the point that even movements which explicitly lash out at modernity, are based on modern frames of thought and action.

Or, in other words, the past is a different country.

To be fair, most of us live in nations around 200 years old or less. The past literally IS a different country.

01-19-2010, 11:50 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

To be fair, most of us live in nations around 200 years old or less. The past literally IS a different country.

A different country, on a different planet. There are more differences between the modern mindset and the pre-modern mindset than there are between modern cultures and almost every alien culture in fiction.

01-23-2010, 02:27 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

To be fair, most of us live in nations around 200 years old or less. The past literally IS a different country.

Speak for yourself. :p

01-23-2010, 02:44 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wight

Beloved of evil DMs everywhere since the very first days of D&D, wights are I believe the first level-draining monsters to appear. While in 2nd edition losing a level is not quite as much a disaster as it is in Basic or OD&D, it's still always enough to strike terror into the hearts of the players - one reason why I'm a big fan of wights (and instakill monsters too).

Wights can create other wights to be their servants from the creatures they slay, which (as with other such creatures) causes the question to arise: why don't wights rule the world? If I was a wight, the argument runs, I would kill and wight-ize a dozen peasants a day until I was king of the universe. The natural response is that wights aren't interested in world conquest (the MM calls them "solitary" creatures), which makes in-game sense, but I do rather like the idea of a wight-ruled kingdom somewhere in a campaign world.

Adventure hook/mysterious unexplained throwaway MM comment: "Once a character becomes a wight, recovery is nearly impossible, requiring a special quest."

What that special quest might be is left entirely up to individual DMs, it seems.

01-23-2010, 03:26 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yup, the "special quest" thing is a perfect set-up for further adventures!

Also, I think I've conveyed my dislike (some would call it outright hate) of level draining. In my experience, it doesn't terrify or scare the players; it annoys and frustrates them.

That aside, there's a remarkable continuity between the wight pics, starting with the Trampier pic in the 1e MM and going at least up till 3e MM; I can't remember the wight illustration in 4e MM, but I wouldn't be surprised if it preserved the overall look of the example wight. :)

01-23-2010, 04:38 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Actually, except for an urge for solitude, what are the disadvantages for a character becoming a wight?

The new level draining powers might be a better alternative than the 'special quest'.

01-23-2010, 05:59 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Actually, except for an urge for solitude, what are the disadvantages for a character becoming a wight?

The new level draining powers might be a better alternative than the 'special quest'.

There was a Pyramid article on this very subject ages ago.

Apparently wights seem to lack teh "get up and go" of the moar adventurous undead, preferring to haunt their tombs doing basically nothing.

Howevar it was suggested that there is no reason that wights can't adventure. They are basically massively underpriced and their stay-at-home attitude is all that stops them from ruling teh world.

It also say that if the worst happens then don't worry, your party will be all wight.

01-23-2010, 06:36 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wights are one of the few monsters where I was heavily influenced by Tolkien -- though I didn't know barrow-wights were actually evil spirits sent to animate the bones of buried Dunedain, not the traditional restless dead. I always imagine warriors buried with longships and heavy bronze bracelets, serpent-shaped mounds (perhaps the tomb is set within the mummified and buried corpse of a dragon?), neolithic druidic rites, elf hills where ancient lords and ladies of the Tuatha Dé Danann lie in their diminished state....

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

It also say that if the worst happens then don't worry, your party will be all wight.

A simple wight lie, and nobody would ever know.

01-23-2010, 09:11 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

A simple wight lie, and nobody would ever know.

It was all wight on the night.

Or something. That article featured lots of variations on the same pun.

Oh, fight for your wight, to paaarrttty!!!

01-23-2010, 09:51 PM

Hellzon

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **lthaeur**

That aside, there's a remarkable continuity between the wight pics, starting with the Trampier pic in the 1e MM and going at least up till 3e MM; I can't remember the wight illustration in 4e MM, but I wouldn't be surprised if it preserved the overall look of the example wight. :)

Spoiler: 4E pic

Close enough.

By the way. Wight, wraith, spectre, plain old ghost. Anyone else having trouble telling all these undead variants apart?

01-23-2010, 10:21 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

^ It's the zombie Joker!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hellzon**

By the way. Wight, wraith, spectre, plain old ghost. Anyone else having trouble telling all these undead variants apart?

Wights have solid bodies, and wraiths are cheap Nazgul. Making the spectre more powerful than the wraith is a little arbitrary, but it's no worse than the humanoids. They're just the goblin and hogoblin of spectral undead, as it were.

Ghosts puzzle me a bit, though. Turning hair white, okay. But turning the average human being to dust with two hits? They're flat-out the most powerful of the four, and they really have little or nothing in common with the traditional ghost. They're more like incarnations of time and death and vengeance like Jacob Marley's trio than the largely-harmless but emotionally loaded apparitions that appear in spooky stories.

01-24-2010, 12:49 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hellzon**

By the way. Wight, wraith, spectre, plain old ghost. Anyone else having trouble telling all these undead variants apart?

Since Wights are corporeal undead, I have more trouble telling them apart from ghouls.

But spectres, wraiths, ghosts and any other incorporeal undead are all basically interchangeable.

01-24-2010, 05:06 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Wights are one of the few monsters where I was heavily influenced by Tolkien -- though I didn't know barrow-wights were actually evil spirits sent to animate the bones of buried Dunedain, not the traditional restless dead. I always imagine warriors buried with longships and heavy bronze bracelets, serpent-shaped mounds (perhaps the tomb is set within the mummified and buried corpse of a dragon?), neolithic druidic rites, elf hills where ancient lords and ladies of the Tuatha Dé Danann lie in their diminished state....

And I think Tolkien got the idea from *Draugr* or *haugbui*, from Norse mythology.

Quote:

A simple wight lie, and nobody would ever know.

I remember a story in Dragon, how a DM got fed up with his players always screwing up his adventures through meta-game knowledge of the monsters he was using. So, he mentions a white dragon that's been ravaging the countryside, destroying villages, and looting caravans.

The players go "Ooh, a white dragon! It's going to be a weak one, let's stock up on *Fireballs* and cold resistance!", gather their party and venture forth. Eventually they find the dragon's lair, and see the slightly shriveled, gray-white dragon with glowing red eyes. They fire off the fireballs, and charge... only to be hit by energy-draining breath weapon.

It was, of course, a *wight* dragon.

01-24-2010, 05:37 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **lthaeur**

I remember a story in Dragon, how a DM got fed up with his players always screwing up his adventures through meta-game knowledge of the monsters he was using. So, he mentions a white dragon that's been ravaging the countryside, destroying villages, and looting caravans.

The players go "Ooh, a white dragon! It's going to be a weak one, let's stock up on *Fireballs* and cold resistance!", gather their party and venture forth. Eventually they find the dragon's lair, and see the slightly shriveled, gray-white dragon with glowing red eyes. They fire off the fireballs, and charge... only to be hit by energy-draining breath weapon.

It was, of course, a *wight* dragon.

He did the wight thing.

01-24-2010, 05:43 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

It was all wight on the night.

Or something. That article featured lots of variations on the same pun.

Oh, fight for your wight, to paaarrttty!!!

Did they remember to include the Apartheid-era pun about the terrible conditions in kingdoms ruled by these Undead, where adventurers were denied access to all the best levels of the dungeon by signs saying "Wights Only"?:o

01-24-2010, 06:03 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wight

I just noticed one curiosity in the Wight entry, under size it says "M (4'-7')". The other standard undead in the Monstrous Manual are all closer to the human average:

Skeleton - M (6' tall)
Shadow - M (6' tall)
Ghoul - M (5-6' tall)
Ghast - M (5-6' tall)
Wraith - M (6' tall)
Spectre - M (6' tall)
Vampire - M (5½'-6½')
Ghost - M (5-6' tall)
Zombie - M (6')
Lich - M (6' tall)
[and the demilich is 6' tall too, despite being little more than a skull!]

But the wight's height range is 4 to 7 feet tall, which suggests a couple of possibilities:

- Wights are often members of ancient demi-human and humanoid civilizations (that old chestnut!) so are often of races of different height than the human norm (dwarf wights, bugbear wights et cetera)
- Wights have their bodies twisted by the unholy forces that animate them. Some become twisted hunchbacks a foot or two shorter than their living height, some are stretched into towering, lanky horrors like the basketball team from hell.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Adventure hook/mysterious unexplained throwaway MM comment: "Once a character becomes a wight, recovery is nearly impossible, requiring a special quest."

I smell a custom adventure!

A particularly nasty twist in the wight's writeup is if the party try the obvious approach of applying *raise dead* to try restoring their lost comrade to life it will "utterly" annihilate the wight.

It sounds like one of those rare occasions when the player may prefer the *reincarnation* spell.

01-24-2010, 06:12 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Also, I think I've conveyed my dislike (some would call it outright hate) of level draining. In my experience, it doesn't terrify or scare the players; it annoys and frustrates them.

I have nothing against the concept, but I don't much care for the execution. I'd prefer it if they suffered a permanent penalty of some sort rather than appearing to forget their experiences (for a while I toyed with the idea of introducing a houserule where each level of energy drain drained that many points from each of the victim's ability scores, but I never did. A -1 off Str, Con, Dex, Cha, Wis and Int is almost as much a pain to keep track of. Maybe I should have made it a -1 of their highest ability score(s) instead...

At least it isn't the nightmare of 3rd edition level draining, with all the recalculation of the character's skills & feats.

01-24-2010, 09:58 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Actually, except for an urge for solitude, what are the disadvantages for a character becoming a wight?

The new level draining powers might be a better alternative than the 'special quest'.

You have to become a slave of the wight who wight-ized you, I think.

01-24-2010, 11:59 AM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

And you've lost all your levels, plus it's very very hard to learn new stuff once you're undead. You've gotta be damn motivated to do anything significant with your unlife.

01-24-2010, 04:32 PM

Celiasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

And you've lost all your levels, plus it's very very hard to learn new stuff once you're undead.

You've gotta be damn motivated to do anything significant with your unlife.

That's what clerics are for. They're excellent motivators.

Evil Cleric: Command undead!

Good Cleric: You know that I'm high enough level to get a D result right?

See? Motivation!

01-25-2010, 12:20 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

And you've lost all your levels, plus it's very very hard to learn new stuff once you're undead.

Exactly, most standard AD&D undead lose all their character class levels and are unable to gain any more. It's only liches that retain their class levels as wizards or priest, and it's very uncertain as to whether they can gain more.

So if you become a wight and the rest of your party is 3rd level you'll definitely outshine them, but once your comrades are 12th level heroes and you're still a 4+3 HD monster the cleric can annihilate or enslave by waving a divine symbol in your general direction the change doesn't look so hot.

There are official examples of standard AD&D undead 'souped up' with class levels (the classic example being Strahd von Zarovich, who was a 10th level magic-user), but these are custom jobs. If your PC runs into a wight and get level-sucked to death odd are they'll just become a regular monster.

01-25-2010, 01:00 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

So this D&D adventurer went to see his cleric.

"I was robbing a tomb and I got surprised by this wight and I got a couple of negative levels," he said "can you sort that?"

"Yeah sure, leave your gold in the collection plate and I'll see what I can do about it." Said the cleric.

About a week later the adventurer was back again.

"I was just minding my own business, wasn't even actually robbing a tomb, yet, I was in this tavern, and this specter just came right through the wall, and just BAM, like that, took half my levels. Can you get them back for me?"

"Yeah, leave the usual gold and I'll have a look at it." Said the cleric.

Well wouldn't you know it, about a week later the adventurer was back yet again.

"It happened again!" He exclaimed.

"Oh dear, not more undead?" Said the cleric.

"No, this time I was staying well away from undead, we all were. We took this nice non-undead job, clearing out an evil wizard's tower. Well we were just robbing his room when he burst in, and it turned out that he was a necromancer or something. Cause wouldn't you know it, I get hit with this horrible level-draining Evenerate thing or something." Complained the adventurer

"So can you jam those levels back in my body again?" The adventurer pleaded.

"Ah, not this time," said the cleric, "I'm going to have to sign you off work for six weeks to recover, I think you've got a repetitive drain injury."

01-31-2010, 03:02 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Seems to be quiet around here.

Anyhow, getting back to wights.

Their description implies they need life-energy for nourishment, its Combat entry says "the wight is able to feed on the life essence of its foes", and under Ecology it says "it is this [level] draining which provides them with sustenance."

So, if you leave a wight entombed long enough, does it starve to "death" for want of life-energy? I suspect it's more likely they keep themselves ticking over by sapping the life from nearby vegetation, explaining why "their presence will gradually cause the plant life around their lairs to wither and die, marking the region as unclean".

Maybe there's an adventure seed in there somewhere:

* A group of low-level characters are hired to transport a wight sealed in a sarcophagous into the middle of a desolate waste, were it will starve to destruction in its lifeless surroundings.

* A farmer is puzzled as to why his new field's crops wither and die. He digs it up and unearths a wight. Soon his whole family are Undead and are preparing to march on the local village, despising their former friends for the harvest festival they are enjoying. Only the PCs stand in their way.

Hmm, nothing terribly inspiring.

Anyhow, I suspect the reason the Wight entry goes into much detail about their level-draining is that Wights are the lowest level standard AD&D undead that possess this ability. I've long assumed AD&D Spectres, Vampires and their ilk had a similar animal-repelling and plant-blighting properties to the Wight.

So, what else can be said about Wights? I suppose we could come up with some ideas for the "Special Quest" that is required to restore a Wight to Life.

* The party have to track down a Druid and have their friend reincarnated, then polymorphed into a human(oid) form if he comes back as a badger.

* To restore their friend they must first wrest his or her soul from a mysterious "Master Wight", who sleeps in a vast barrow in a distant land (or the Depth of Hell, depending on the party's level).

* The secret of Wight Revival is known only to a few powerful necromancers who formerly ruled the tyrannical Kingdom of the Skull. In return for their aid they demand the PCs help restore their Apartheid regime....eek:

* Plenty of people know the ritual to allow one to successfully use *raise dead* on a Wight. The problem is it needs ludicrously expensive and dangerous to acquire ingredients to perform (water from the Marid's holy fountain, the heart of an ancient black dragon, a phoenix's feather et cetera).

I'm sure someone else can come up with a few more interesting ideas.

01-31-2010, 03:49 AM

Capellan

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

A mutated magical plant is overrunning the village: it's immune to magic, normal fire, and almost impossibel to chop down, and its growing at a ridiculous rate. In desperation, the villagers ask the PCs to raid a local tomb and bring back a wight, hoping the creature's unhallowed energy will destroy the plant.

Which it does, but now the PCs have a wight with lots of bonus hit dice to deal with ...

01-31-2010, 06:50 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

So, if you leave a wight entombed long enough, does it starve to "death" for want of life-energy?

A wight's preferred food source is people. They're yummy. And kind of dense.

Animals have keen senses. They know something's wrong. When they sense the taint of the energy-draining undead, they run fast and far away. Humans sense the same thing. The prickling on the back of the neck, that unfocused feeling that something's wrong. But too often, we ignore that. We say that fear of dark or the night is irrational, unreasonable. Makes us the best kind of prey.

Plants on the other hand are like bread and water are to humans. Or gruel. Won't starve. There's something to sit heavily at the bottom of an otherwise empty stomach. At least until the plants all wither away.

At that point, what does a wight eat?

Well, itself. Buried away in the barrow, the only thing that's left after the ivy and bushes and even the trees turns brown is their own once-living body. Not very tasty. Not very nourishing. But aside from the occasional careless worm or bug, that's all they have.

A few centuries of starvation later, the wight has eaten away everything that's left to eat. The wight becomes a wraith.

01-31-2010, 12:10 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Seems to be quite around here.

After that pun, I think we were all a little stunned...

Anyway, The Quest To Get Tim Back From The Undead.

I'm envisaging an Epic(TM) Quest, that involves seeking information on the ritual from the Necromancers of the Skull, who inform the heroes that they must take the head of the Wight that drained their friend into the Barrow of End of Time, which exists beyond the boundaries of the normal world and holds all the souls claimed by darkness in this age. There they must defeat the guardians, and swap the head of the Wight for that of their friend, Tim. And then go back and put it on Tim, who has probably wandered away and enslaved a city by now. Only trouble is that the only ones who know the location of the Barrow of End of Time are the Giants in the Frozen Wastes, or possibly the Lizard People of the Great Acid Desert, or maybe the Forgotten King, although no-one knows where he is anyway, these days... Additional points or involving pirates.

01-31-2010, 03:44 PM

Belchion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

or maybe the Forgotten King, although no-one knows where he is anyway, these days... Additional points or involving pirates.

There is a map said to show the tomb of the Forgotten King, but it fell in the hand of the most dreaded pirate captain known - former elf princess Lily turned evil. Now they have to infiltrate her underground wood lair and recover that map...

01-31-2010, 11:03 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The big problem with those "quest to restore the dead guy to life" thing is I can't see many groups going for it. By the time you get to the guardians of the edge of time or the other plane of reality to obtain marid's tears, I imagine most groups will just say "screw it, Tim, just roll up a new character." Especially since the newly raised character not only was likely drained several level by the wight, but they also don't have all the experience the epic quest got everyone else. If it's the king or something I can see it, but then the DM goes in knowing that any wight encounter will be equally tedious should someone die. Well, unless you can just do the same quest again. "Travel to the end of time? No problem, we'll just teleport back. Bernie, do we still have leftover marid tears?" Of course, level draining undead are character dumps anyway.

What if the wight didn't immediately destroy all plant life, though? A village has a bad crop this year, but they eat the shriveled fruit anyway, because that's what you do in a poor village in pseudo-medieval fantasy land. But it turns out there's a wight lurking in the fields, and now all the villagers have an undead curse (a wight blight, if you will.) The party has to find a cure and fast, or the 3000 or so villagers will simultaneously turn into wights, potentially ending kingdom.

01-31-2010, 11:09 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

The big problem with those "quest to restore the dead guy to life" thing is I can't see many groups going for it. By the time you get to the guardians of the edge of time or the other plane of reality to obtain marid's tears, I imagine most groups will just say "screw it, Tim, just roll up a new character." Especially since the newly raised character not only was likely drained several level by the wight, but they also don't have all the experience the epic quest got everyone else.

Even worse than getting back a character that would be worse than rolling up a new one, the player of Mr. Wightfood has to sit around for who knows how many sessions waiting while the other PCs are on an epic quest. "So you guys get to have fun for the next few weeks adventuring to the end of time, while I watch to see if you bring back my dead PC? And then he'll suck, even if you succeed? Hand me a Player's Handbook; I'm rolling up a new cleric."

02-01-2010, 01:21 AM

MadWriter

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

So this D&D adventurer went to see his cleric.

"I was robbing a tomb and I got surprised by this wight and I got a couple of negative levels," he said "can you sort that?"

"Yeah sure, leave your gold in the collection plate and I'll see what I can do about it." Said the cleric.

About a week later the adventurer was back again.

"I was just minding my own business, wasn't even actually robbing a tomb, yet, I was in this tavern, and this specter just came right through the wall, and just BAM, like that, took half my levels. Can you get them back for me?"

"Yeah, leave the usual gold and I'll have a look at it." Said the cleric.

Well wouldn't you know it, about a week later the adventurer was back yet again.

"It happened again!" He exclaimed.

"Oh dear, not more undead?" Said the cleric.

"No, this time I was staying well away from undead, we all were. We took this nice non-undead job, clearing out an evil wizard's tower. Well we were just robbing his room when he burst in, and it turned out that he was a necromancer or something. Cause wouldn't you know it, I get hit with this horrible level-draining Evenerate thing or something." Complained the adventurer

"So can you jam those levels back in my body again?" The adventurer pleaded.

"Ah, not this time," said the cleric, "I'm going to have to sign you off work for six weeks to recover, I think you've got a repetitive drain injury."

Laugh Point!

02-01-2010, 01:36 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Seems to be quite around here.

Gah, how did I miss that typo. It should be "quiet". Now I'm going to have to change it.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**
Anyway, The Quest To Get Tim Back From The Undead.

I'm envisaging an Epic(TM) Quest, that involves seeking information on the ritual from the Necromancers of the Skull, who inform the heroes that they must take the head of the Wight that drained their friend into the Barrow of End of Time, which exists beyond the boundaries of the normal world and holds all the souls claimed by darkness in this age. There they must defeat the guardians, and swap the head of the Wight for that of their friend, Tim. And then go back and put it on Tim, who has probably wandered away and enslaved a city by now. Only trouble is that the only ones who know the location of the Barrow of End of Time are the Giants in the Frozen Wastes, or possibly the Lizard People of the Great Acid Desert, or maybe the Forgotten King, although no-one knows where he is anyway, these days... Additional points or involving pirates.

Well as EmperorSeth and Mr Teapot so cogently point out, there are serious disadvantages in going too far overboard in the Dewightification Quest.

Better to keep it relatively simple...

Consulting a Necromancer of the Skull they learn the ritual, but it requires one of the jade blocks from the legendary Ziggurat of Life, plus the head of the wight that slew their comrade. Fortunately, the notorious pirate Black Lily is known to possess such a treasure, so all the party have to do is attack her jungle island base.

It's a lot easier if you present the party with a problem in block & wight.

02-01-2010, 01:53 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Sorry for the quietness. I've been crippled by a double-whammy of ruinous food poisoning and house moving. On with the MM. We really are getting near the end now, folks. Sniff.

Will O'Wisp

Thank heavens for things like the will o'wisp - one of those earlier D&D monsters (like brownies, leprechauns, dryads or treants) who I really think, if you had the time and inclination, you could use to construct an entirely different fairy-tale based *Gawain and the Green Knight* style game of mystery and magic. Sword & Sorcery may be all the rage amongst the Old School movement but I think there was a much broader church in there, hinted at by the inclusion of monsters like this.

But anyway, I digress. Will O'Wisps. (Not Will O' *the* Wisp, which is what I always thought they were called.) Malevolent entities which dwell in bogs and marshes and attempt to lure their victims to a miserable end so they can feed off their fear and misery. They communicate entirely by light, though "exceptional examples of this race have mastered a very simple sound-based language. They produce sounds by vibrating very rapidly and thus have a shallow and ghostly-sounding voice when they 'speak'" which I think ruins the mystery somewhat but is undeniably pretty cool.

I'm interested in the designation of Will O'Wisps as Chaotic Evil. It seems that their entire motivation for luring people into swamps is merely for nutrition, which surely makes them little different to a lion or wolf or any other predator. There is an element of sadism to the Wisps that you might not get in a lion - the insistence on prolonging the death throes of the victim - but this itself is surely only a means of generating more food stuff in the form of fear and dread. So really, the worst Will O'Wisps can be accused of is looking out for themselves, which hardly puts them in the evil camp.

02-02-2010, 08:06 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

No love for the poor Will O'Wisp...

02-02-2010, 08:22 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I was going to mention that the Will o'wisp is surprisingly intelligent (I'd have rated it as Non, personally), and that that probably has to do with its Chaotic Evilness. It's not that it looks after itself, it's that it does evil stuff even when it isn't.

Also, the entry says something about surrendering and revealing treasure, but I am left unaware of how it is liable to do that, given that very few PCs will speak Will o'wisp.

"Look, it's flickering strange colors and making spooky noises."

"Quick! Kill it before it finishes the spell!"

It's not easy being a will o'wisp.

I also feel like there should be some sort of Will o'wisp origin ruminations:

"Will o'wisps may be the jealous spirits of those who die in swamps, come to make other will o'wisps and bring themselves company."

or

"Sages speculate that will o'wisps may be angry nature spirits seeking vengeance for mortal desecration of the wilderness.

Druids scoff at these claims, pointing at the members of their own circles who have fallen prey to the malevolent creatures."

02-02-2010, 08:38 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Perhaps it's the stunted descendant of a Colour Out Of Space.

02-02-2010, 08:42 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The wisp not only feeds off the sense of panic caused by imminent death, it's exceptionally intelligent. The moral choice to live can itself be evil, in this case. "I need eat, so an endless series of others have to die screaming" is the ultimate in selfish behavior.

That would also explain why vampires are chaotic evil -- though vampires also have that difficult-to-explain clause in their description that says that they try to avoid killing those they feed on. Except that 2-level energy drain means instant death to the majority of (1-HD) humanoids. Perhaps they subsist wholly on experienced adventurers?

I see they did away with the unpopular "wisps start life as small humanoids" explanation that appeared in the first MM2. Which is actually a shame -- with the pseudo-scientific attempt to rationalize their ecology, it helps to understand that wisps are a failed attempt by a humanoid race to ascend to one of those "higher planes of existence" we hear about in bad science fiction (see Star Trek and Stargate for related gobbleygook). Instead of becoming creatures of pure energy or thought, they both are born mortal and have to feed on other creatures to survive. They're energy vampires with a squishy larval stage.

Otherwise, I agree that the attempt to explain away wisps as static lightning dispensers diminishes their mythical power. They are boogiemen or fey; the flicking light visible in the corner of the eye, the seductive and deadly power of the unkempt wilderness.

The wisp is also one of the creatures missing from BECMI D&D (the closest is the wylchlight from the Creature Crucible).

02-02-2010, 08:55 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Nothing about their odd magical weaknesses? Maze, magic missile and protection from evil are the only spells to affect them. Weird.

02-02-2010, 09:10 PM

Lukas Sjöström

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thane of Fife**

I also feel like there should be some sort of Will o'wisp origin ruminations:

"Will o'wisps may be the jealous spirits of those who die in swamps, come to make other will o'wisps and bring themselves company."

or

"Sages speculate that will o'wisps may be angry nature spirits seeking vengeance for mortal desecration of the wilderness. Druids scoff at these claims, pointing at the members of their own circles who have fallen prey to the malevolent creatures."

In Swedish folklore, they were the restless souls of dishonest land surveyors. Cheating people when it came to ownership of land was Serious Business.

02-02-2010, 09:17 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One possibility is that Will o'Wisp's feed on any emotional energy; most of them are just cruel and malicious, and prefer the aromas of mortal terror and despair. But the rare good, or just neutral, ones will find nourishment and employment as party lights for fey revels.

02-02-2010, 09:38 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Nothing about their odd magical weaknesses? Maze, magic missile and protection from evil are the only spells to affect them. Weird.

Like with golems, I imagine it was originally laziness.

PC: I *fireball* the walking statue.

GM: It's a big hunk of rock. Even using a acetylene blowtorch for a week wouldn't do more than scorch its ankle.

So no *call lightning* or *cone of cold*, either.

PC: Acid?

GM: If you want to clean off the grime.

PC: So *charm monster* is right out?

GM: Right.

PC: Illusion?

GM: No mind.

PC: *Shatter*?

GM: Too low-level.

PC: How about *rock to mud*?

GM: Well, I don't want one spell to automatically take it out. But to be fair... how about a *slow* effect? Say 2d6 rounds?

PC: Okay. Then I follow up with *stone to flesh*.

GM: Interesting. Okay, it shivers and turns to flesh.

PC: A flesh golem? Hey, those are easy!

GM: Well, no. It pops back to normal next round. But if you hit it with a normal spell this round, I'll allow it.

PC: Oh.

GM: Hmm. When I write this up, wouldn't it be easier to just list all the spells that *do* work?

PC: Whatever. *Fireball*!

The wisp is the same way, except the exceptions are force effects. A list of notes on every spell ever published would be complete overkill -- at least for a single monster entry. Though that's exactly what they did with the original writeups of the planes. Then in later editions, the original exception-based monster design becomes enshrined as true invulnerability. Well, at least for golems.

02-02-2010, 10:00 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The wisp not only feeds off the sense of panic caused by imminent death, it's exceptionally intelligent. The moral choice to live can itself be evil, in this case. "I need eat, so an endless series of others have to die screaming" is the ultimate in selfish behavior.

Not so long ago we used to slaughter cattle, pigs and sheep in painful ways for their food, and longer ago we'd do it to the deer etc. we caught wild as hunter gatherers. Did that make us chaotic evil? It seems like a strange argument; by definition all predation is premised on the fact that some being is going to suffer and die to keep another alive.

02-02-2010, 10:06 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Not so long ago we used to slaughter cattle, pigs and sheep in painful ways for their food, and longer ago we'd do it to the deer etc. we caught wild as hunter gatherers. Did that make us chaotic evil? It seems like a strange argument; by definition all predation is premised on the fact that some being is going to suffer and die to keep another alive.

I can't see this ending well, so I'll just say that I don't agree with the argument that killing an animal has the same moral weight as killing a human, and be done.

02-02-2010, 10:51 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

I can't see this ending well, so I'll just say that I don't agree with the argument that killing an animal has the same moral weight as killing a human, and be done.

Fair enough, I don't want this thread to get into these sort of debates. I'll just say that I agree that killing an animal doesn't have the same moral weight as killing a human, but that if I was a Will O'Wisp I would probably see the matter very differently. And be done. ;)

02-02-2010, 10:55 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

They did away with the humanoid origin, but I think Dragon confirmed they are still big fleshy blobs under all that light. That disappoints me, even if I know beings made of pure light probably wouldn't fit in the aberration category.

As a kid, will o wisps freaked me out just because I suddenly saw them everywhere. It was a case of selective memory, sure, but seeing it show up in Sound of friggin Music was still weird.

02-02-2010, 10:58 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

They did away with the humanoid origin, but I think Dragon confirmed they are still big fleshy blobs under all that light. That disappoints me, even if I know beings made of pure light probably wouldn't fit in the aberration category.

As a kid, will o wisps freaked me out just because I suddenly saw them everywhere. It was a case of selective memory, sure, but seeing it show up in Sound of friggin Music was still weird.

Yes, the fleshy blob thing is as boring as anything to me. Beings composed of gas and unearhtly light is what they are in my mind.

02-03-2010, 02:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yes, the fleshy blob thing is as boring as anything to me. Beings composed of gas and unearhtly light is what they are in my mind.

That's my preference to, all the folklore I've read about will o'wisp / will'o'the'wisp / corpsecandles et cetera gives the impression they're ephemeral or ghostly entities with little or no real substance - although that begs the question how they collect their treasure.

I do like sim_james's idea.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sim_james**

Perhaps it's the stunted descendant of a Colour Out Of Space.

which ties in nicely with them being a mixture of malaria and eldritch radiation.

T'other thing I noticed the first time I used them in play is AD&D Will O'Wisps are really tough in a fight - AC -8, 9 Hit Dice, 2d8 damage per touch and immunity to almost all spells makes them a hard nut to crack. I could have sworn they needed powerful magical weapons to hit as well (like +3 or something), but the Monstrous Manual says they can be injured by mundane arms.

So I wonder why they bother lurking in desolate wastes and luring away lone travellers, when they could terrorize an average village with practical impunity (wouldn't setting fire to a few occupied huts or slowly electrocuting a peasant family or three create more emotional outbursts than a single victim sinking into quicksand?).

Maybe it's a question of energy budget - those electric shocks may drain a lot of energy from the Wisp, so using them to kill prey may tire them out more than it revivifies them. Either that or they can only feed off a single individual at a time, because they have to "harmonize" with their dying victim's minds to sap their dying brain activity.

02-03-2010, 02:31 AM

cavalier

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

So I wonder why they bother lurking in desolate wastes and luring away lone travellers, when they could terrorize an average village with practical impunity (wouldn't setting fire to a few occupied huts or slowly electrocuting a peasant family or three create more emotional outbursts than a single victim sinking into quicksand?).

Mayhaps some Lawful Evil type who runs a town/empire/whatever would be keen to recruit them to serve as ever-lit lamp posts, allowing them to feed on the terror and tension of the townsfolk...

02-03-2010, 04:09 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

T'other thing I noticed the first time I used them in play is AD&D Will O'Wisps are really tough in a fight - AC -8, 9 Hit Dice, 2d8 damage per touch and immunity to almost all spells makes them a hard nut to crack. I could have sworn they needed powerful magical weapons to hit as well (like +3 or something), but the Monstrous Manual says they can be injured by mundane arms.

That has some odd implications. Insubstantial creatures like ghosts or creatures made of gas like aerial servants generally require magical weapons to hit. Since the will o' the wisp does not, that suggests the wisp is actually a material creature. The super-low AC (they might have had the lowest AC in the original MM) on the other hand suggests that their body is both small... and fast.

Maybe they're actually quickling fireflies.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

So I wonder why they bother lurking in desolate wastes and luring away lone travellers, when they could terrorize an average village with practical impunity (wouldn't setting fire to a few occupied huts or slowly electrocuting a peasant family or three create more emotional outbursts than a single victim sinking into quicksand?).

There's a subtle but important difference between 1st and 2nd edition. In 1st edition, "[a] victim trapped by these hazards feeds the will-o-wisp as it expires, for the thing feeds upon the fleeing life force". Nothing about pain or suffering.

It's explicitly noted that the reason they like dangerous places like bogs and mires and catacombs is because they're full of natural traps.

Expanding on that, the presence of wisps might be a hint that the dungeon ahead is riddled with *Tomb of Horrors*-style deathtraps. They might congregate near the most deadly.

They could even be the vultures of the magical world. Bog-lights might descend in swarms upon battlefields, feeding upon the dying. Orbs of energy might circle around giant ravening monsters, following them and consuming their leavings. Hospitals might have to hire exterminators to keep them at bay.

02-03-2010, 03:31 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

...[W]ith the pseudo-scientific attempt to rationalize their ecology

Every (A)D&D attempt to rationalise the existence of mythical creatures of folklore makes me wince a little bit more. Can we just keep some things spooky and mysterious? And without XP values? Pretty please?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Otherwise, I agree that the attempt to explain away wisps as static lightning dispensers diminishes their mythical power. They are boogiemens or fey; the flicking light visible in the corner of the eye, the seductive and deadly power of the unkempt wilderness.

I agree with you completely.

But I do want a reason for people to follow the Spooky Floating Lights sometimes, so that if a party sees them, they don't automatically flee/attack.

Perhaps they will guide lone (or lost) travellers to the traveller's greatest secret wish. Lost peasants get guided to the edge of their Village In The Marsh and safety, while jaded adventurers and wicked men are led to the sinkholes where the Lost Gold of the Jumblees is deeply buried. Along with the Jumblees. And the Wisp feeds on the (expected) relief and gratitude of their follower, and can get a little bitter and twisted if not given this...

02-03-2010, 05:09 PM

The Last Conformist

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Lukas Sjöström**

In Swedish folklore, they were the restless souls of dishonest land surveyors.

Which, incidentally, is one of my favourite bits of folklore.

I need to use it in a game someday.

02-03-2010, 06:17 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

One possibility is that Will o'Wisp's feed on any emotional energy; most of them are just cruel and malicious, and prefer the aromas of mortal terror and despair. But the rare good, or just neutral, ones will find nourishment and employment as party lights for fey revels.

Ravenloft Compendium 3:

Will O'Dawn: Chaotic Good. Feeds on happiness and exhilaration.

Will O'Deep: Neutral Evil. Feeds on desperation and fear.

Will O'Mist: Chaotic Neutral. Feeds on emotions of people who are crossing into The Mists.

Will O'Sea: Neutral Evil. Feeds off panic. Finds the panic of drowning to be the most delicious.

Ravenloft loved variants of "horror" monsters. The number of cloaklers they have is even higher.

02-03-2010, 06:36 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Every (A)D&D attempt to rationalise the existence of mythical creatures of folklore makes me wince a little bit more. Can we just keep some things spooky and mysterious? And without XP values? Pretty please?

No XPs?

Then there would be no point to slaying them!

...Unless they have treasure.;)

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

But I do want a reason for people to follow the Spooky Floating Lights sometimes, so that if a party sees them, they don't automatically flee/attack.

There's already an official AD&D monster that fills the "Helpful spooky light that is nourished by positive emotions", namely the the **Will o' Dawn**. Unfortunately it only appears at sunrise, hence its name. Oh, and there's also the **Will-o'-Mist** that get people lost in swamps but doesn't want to kill them, which could be helpful if approached correctly.

Of course in the Grand Tradition of AD&D, the nice (and neutral) wisps look very similar to the nasty ones, just so the adventurers will confuse one for t'other with hilarious results.

I can also see a role for a neutral "Urban" wisp that feeds off more neutral or positive emotions but isn't fussy about their source, that tends to hang around places where people are excited by positive feelings (e.g. theatres) or more carnal sensations (e.g. arenas and houses of ill repute). Its able to amplify its chosen victim's sensations, but this leaves them fatigued. I'd probably called it a Will-o'-Bliss.

Hmm, now I want to stat one up...

02-03-2010, 10:33 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **The Last Conformist**

Which, incidentally, is one of my favourite bits of folklore.

I need to use it in a game someday.

Heck, it might justify making them LAWFUL evil. Though that's hard to pull off when you live alone in a swamp. Maybe that's what drives them to the peasant villages. Not just to eat the life force of the victims, but to engage

in some gerrymandering while they're at it. Or maybe the evil tyrant uses them as his city enforcers, especially the REALLY strict curfew.

02-08-2010, 07:11 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wolf

There's some hilarious PETA-girl inspired stuff in the wolf entry, my particular favourite being this gem: "The truth is that *never in recorded history* has a non-rabid or non-chaarmed wolf attacked any creature having an equal or higher intellect than itself." Though you also have to love how the hunting of wolves is referred to as a "genocide". (I mean, who hasn't seen a wolf pelt for sale and immediately thought of Auschwitz?)

What we really want in a D&D wolf is a ruthless carnivore that will prey on adventurers who make the mistake of camping out in cold isolated places at night. Luckily you get this if you just use the stats.

Dire Wolf

In D&D this is just a big wolf. I would like a berzerk fighting frenzy style special ability for the dire wolf, or even a magical ability to transform into a human berzerker for a short period, but no dice.

Worg

The intelligent, vocal, goblin-befriending *Hobbit* worg, this, though misspelt for some reason.

Winter Wolf

As is often the case with PETA-girl inspired MM entries, the designers managed to sneak something past her iron-fisted censorship regime with this section, noting that a white wolf pelt is worth 5,000 gps, and that they have a "foul disposition".

02-08-2010, 07:21 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

There is a 3.5 book from Distant Horizon that has winter wolves that adopt humans into their pack. They make a few minor magical alterations but for the most part the humans are simply poorly treated members that have the advantage of being able to buy supplies from local towns. They may be evil but then the wolves have a stake in the survival of said towns and it gets interesting on that dynamic.

02-09-2010, 12:40 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wolf

Dire Wolf

In D&D this is just a big wolf. I would like a berzerk fighting frenzy style special ability for the dire wolf, or even a magical ability to transform into a human berzerker for a short period, but no dice.

Why? Dire wolves were real historical creatures. You don't insist that cave bears shoot lightning out of their eyes, do you? Or that dinosaurs are in fact genius-level psychics? There's plenty of magical wolf monsters in D&D; let dire wolves be dire wolves.

But your crazy berserker wolves sound like a pretty cool take on wolferes.

02-09-2010, 02:02 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

There's some hilarious PETA-girl inspired stuff in the wolf entry, my particular favourite being this gem: "The truth is that *never in recorded history* has a non-rabid or non-charmed wolf attacked any creature having an equal or higher intellect than itself."

Since that's obviously not the case in the world *we* live in, why are D&D's wolves so nice? And why do they hate the mentally challenged? (Wolves have an Int of 2-4, which means humanoids with an Int of 2 or 3 are thus fair game to some wolves, at least according to that quote.)

Maybe wolves are really degenerate humanoids. Perhaps, when a humanoid society becomes completely wicked and self-destructive (i.e. Chaotic Evil), they are cursed by the goddess of the moon. During the next full moon, peasants start scratching in their sleep. The king drunkenly stares at his hairy palms during the evening's revels. The night watch tongue their incisors, which seem larger than they remember. In the morning, the streets of the nation are empty. While in the hills, new packs of wolves howl their rage and fury at the departing moon.

The entire country has been turned into blameless animals. Still ravaging beasts, but free from any kind of moral choice. Their world is just Hunger and the Hunt. Since they don't know any better, they no longer tip the scales of Alignment. The Balance has been reset.

Except buried in the back of their now-bestial minds, somewhere, they know. They know what they once were. When they see others who are as they once were, they are filled with an instinctive and primal hate... and fear. They may have gained strength and speed and claws, but they also understand, at some primal level, that what they lost is more important. For they lost reason. Fire, the bow. Tactics, armor, armies. Poison and proclamations offering "1 sp per wolf pelt, apply inside".

That's why they don't attack humanoids: Pure, utter fear. They know they can't compete. Instead, they cower and simper, bite themselves, and flee at the first chance. A captured wolf will prematurely age, and eventually die of terror.

And that's why when they find a creature with their former, dimly-remembered, hated form (two legs, two arms, a covering of second-hand furs or plants) but with the mind of a beast... well, they tear it all to pieces.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The intelligent, vocal, goblin-befriending *Hobbit* worg, this, though misspelt for some reason.

For the same reason TSR had to remove those other references to the Lord of the Circular Metal Bands:

Tolkien Estate (unique monster): AC -10, 300 hp, THACO 1, #AT 0, D —, SA lawsuit.

02-09-2010, 06:16 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

For the same reason TSR had to remove those other references to the Lord of the Circular Metal Bands:

Tolkien Estate (unique monster): AC -10, 300 hp, THACO 1, #AT 0, D —, SA lawsuit.

But the Tolkien Estate surely doesn't own the word "warg" as a trademark - it's a creature from Norse mythology!

02-09-2010, 07:25 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

But the Tolkien Estate surely doesn't own the word "warg" as a trademark - it's a creature from Norse mythology!

Facts never stop a good lawyer.

02-09-2010, 07:49 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Dogs are domesticated wolves. Have any of you used a race that has domesticated dire wolves or worgs (beyond goblins)? Giants with their version of the poodle or deerhound or gnolls with huge scent hounds and such.

02-09-2010, 07:55 PM

Lukas Sjöström

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

But the Tolkien Estate surely doesn't own the word "warg" as a trademark - it's a creature from Norse mythology!

Even worse than that: "warg" or "varg" is simply a word for "wolf". It'd be like prohibiting them from calling it "loup" or something like that. Anyway, isn't there precedence for D&D being able to use words Tolkien took from mythology, like orc?

02-09-2010, 09:10 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Dogs are domesticated wolves. Have any of you used a race that has domesticated dire wolves or worgs (beyond goblins)? Giants with their version of the poodle or deerhound or gnolls with huge scent hounds and such.

Maybe all the variant wolf breeds are really dog breeds. 10,000 years of non-human selective breeding for certain traits. Winter wolves might actually be great Irish setters, all hairy but white instead of red; the favored animal of frost giants on their great sleigh-hunts. Wolfweres might have originally started as a domesticated breed, in a land where having house pets was considered gauche. So over time, they learned to mimic their masters and take on suitable forms. Bred to look like toy... humans. Elves might have a sufficiently refined yet static society to allow that sort of thing. Wargs might be giant pit bulls, high strung and dangerous. The ones orcs used for pit-fights and other brutal sports. Bred for both the size of the dog and the fight in the dog.

02-10-2010, 03:51 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Do goblins breed worgs or do worgs breed goblins?

02-10-2010, 05:50 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

But the Tolkien Estate surely doesn't own the word "warg" as a trademark - it's a creature from Norse mythology!

This is the appropriate time to point to the Indiana Jones RPG claiming that "Nazi" was a trademark of Lucasfilm, right?

02-10-2010, 05:51 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Do goblins breed worgs or do worgs breed goblins?

Barghests breed both, obviously.

02-10-2010, 06:18 AM

Sebmojo

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Since that's obviously not the case in the world we live in, why are D&D's wolves so nice?

That Wiki link is an awesome rejoinder to PETA girl. So the main reason there aren't any wolf attacks any more is because *we killed them all*. Because they kept *attacking us*.

Quote:

Maybe wolves are really degenerate humanoids. Perhaps, when a humanoid society becomes completely wicked and self-destructive (i.e. Chaotic Evil), they are cursed by the goddess of the moon. During the next full moon, peasants start scratching in their sleep. The king drunkenly stares at his hairy palms during the evening's revels. The night watch tongue their incisors, which seem larger than they remember. In the morning, the streets of the nation are empty. While in the hills, new packs of wolves howl their rage and fury at the departing moon.

That made me think of the (wonderful) *God Beneath the Sea*, a book of Greek myths. Sure enough:

Quote:

Originally Posted by **random web encyclopedia**

Lycaon, in Greek mythology, son of Pelasgus and Meliboea, father of Oenotrus and the mythical first king of Arcadia. He was the father of Callisto and, according to some, he raised her son Arcas. He, or his fifty impious sons, entertained Zeus, and set before him a dish of human flesh; the god pushed away the dish in disgust and either killed the king and his sons by lightning or turned them into wolves

Pausanias says that Lycaon sacrificed a child to Zeus on the altar on mount Lycaeus, and immediately after the sacrifice was turned into a wolf.

This gave rise to the story that a man was turned into a wolf at each annual sacrifice to Zeus Lycaeus, but recovered his human form if he abstained from human flesh for ten years.

His cult was driven out by that of the Hellenic Zeus, and Lycaon himself was afterwards represented as an evil spirit, who had insulted the new deity by setting human flesh before him. Robertson Smith considers the sacrifices offered to the wolf-Zeus in Arcadia to have been originally cannibal feasts of a wolf-tribe, who recognized the wolf as their totem. Usener and others identify Lycaon with Zeus Lycaeus, the god of light, who slays his son Nyctimus (the dark) or is succeeded by him, in allusion to the perpetual succession of night and day. According to Ed. Meyer, the belief that Zeus Lycaeus accepted human sacrifice in the form of a wolf was the origin of the myth that Lycaon, the founder of his cult, became a wolf, i.e. participated in the nature of the god by the act of sacrifice, as did all who afterwards duly performed it.

02-10-2010, 07:03 AM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

In the entry's defense, the "wolves never killed anyone" was a pretty well-accepted "fact" back when I grew up. There were books like the Book of Lists which claimed as such, and we didn't have wikipedia to instantly retort it. Even Terry Pratchett used that claim in one of the Discworlds. Even looking at that list, I have some skepticism about a claim of wolf fatality from the 800s.

02-10-2010, 04:35 PM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

This is the appropriate time to point to the Indiana Jones RPG claiming that "Nazi" was a trademark of Lucasfilm, right?

WHAT.

And I'm surprised Lucasfilm wasn't offended...

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

In the entry's defense, the "wolves never killed anyone" was a pretty well-accepted "fact" back when I grew up. There were books like the Book of Lists which claimed as such, and we didn't have wikipedia to instantly retort it. Even Terry Pratchett used that claim in one of the Discworlds. Even looking at that list, I have some skepticism about a claim of wolf fatality from the 800s.

Which side of the Atlantic are you (or the Book of Lists people) on? That probably explains it. Pratchett is British, though ... of course, wolves were extirpated from Britain ages ago.

North American wolves aren't *harmless*; no big animal is; but they do not attack humans except as really unusual flukes unless rabid. Some people think they may have been more aggressive before major European settlement (at least in the far north, according to the Wiki article - hmm, I wonder if this is related to the fact that wolves grow bigger farther north?), but in historic times they aren't.

(Also, which kind of wolf? North America has the red wolf also, which is smaller and does not attack people.)

Eurasian wolves do attack people, and did a lot more in the past.

02-11-2010, 12:13 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

IIRC, the last confirmed wolf-caused fatalities in Finland date back to 1860s or so. Before that, there have certainly been genuine wolf attacks, especially on children working as shepherds, away from the farms.

Again IIRC, though, the number of people - especially elderly, infirm and small children - reported as killed by wolves tended to go way up whenever there was a bad harvest or two, and it has been suggested that many of those cases were actually people killing off unwanted kids or sick, elderly relatives who weren't going to live long anyway and were a drain on the resources in a bad time.

Generally speaking, though, wolves are not a real threat to adult humans, not unless they're rabid or very, very hungry. Bears are much more dangerous, especially when they have cubs.

02-11-2010, 01:34 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Now might be the time to bring up a great idea that someone many years ago posted on ENWorld, and I've always kept in the back of my mind.

Worgs as Wile E Coyote.

Worgs are intelligent, right? Not too terribly smart, but smart enough to know that food gained without a direct confrontation is less dangerous than attacking adventurers yourself. So they build traps. Snares, deadfalls, pits. The lack of opposable thumbs makes some complicated traps difficult, but strong jaws and determination can make up for some of that. Goblins working with you help too.

That same author suggested worgs as working with a thieves' guild, disguised as guide dogs for the blind. A little extra muscle in a shape that most victims wouldn't suspect.

02-11-2010, 01:44 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**
WHAT.

And I'm surprised Lucasfilm wasn't offended...

I think it was Lucasfilm's lawyer that put it in there. But it's been a long time since I looked into it.

02-11-2010, 01:54 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**
That same author suggested worgs as working with a thieves' guild, disguised as guide dogs for the blind. A little extra muscle in a shape that most victims wouldn't suspect.

That's fucking brilliant.

They should also just have a charity that supplies worgs for 1st edition kobalds or commoners. Fighting dogs, for the hard of fighting.

02-11-2010, 07:47 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **lthaeur**
IIRC, the last confirmed wolf-caused fatalities in Finland date back to 1860s or so. Before that, there have certainly been genuine wolf attacks, especially on children working as shepherds, away from the farms.

Again IIRC, though, the number of people - especially elderly, infirm and small children - reported as killed by wolves tended to go way up whenever there was a bad harvest or two, and it has been suggested that many of those cases were actually people killing off unwanted kids or sick, elderly relatives who weren't going to live long anyway and were a drain on the resources in a bad time.

Generally speaking, though, wolves are not a real threat to adult humans, not unless they're rabid or very, very hungry. Bears are much more dangerous, especially when they have cubs.

I think the lack of human fatalities in recent decades can be put down to two things:

- a) Wolves learning to fear human contact.
- b) Lack of opportunity as rural (human) populations decline and motorized transport in rural areas becomes more widespread.

02-12-2010, 01:23 AM

Strangething

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

This is the appropriate time to point to the Indiana Jones RPG claiming that "Nazi" was a trademark of Lucasfilm, right?

The creepy villain from Raiders of the Lost Ark was never given a name, and was just called the Nazi in the script. Since Lucasfilm claimed a trademark on all character names...

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

That same author suggested worgs as working with a thieves' guild, disguised as guide dogs for the blind. A little extra muscle in a shape that most victims wouldn't suspect.

Aren't Worgs medium sized? That's a mighty big seeing eye dog!

02-12-2010, 04:36 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wolf

There's some hilarious PETA-girl inspired stuff in the wolf entry, my particular favourite being this gem: "The truth is that *never in recorded history* has a non-rabid or non-charmed wolf attacked any creature having an equal or higher intellect than itself."

Not to mention that it's cobblers. There are real-world historical records of wolves killing humans, although it's not a common occurrence.

Besides, when PETA-girl specified "equal or higher intellect than itself" I started wondering how that was supposed to work - does the wolf perform IQ tests and only devour creatures that fail them?

Hmm, maybe AD&D wolves are a variety of sphinx, except they don't need to employ riddles being psychic intelligence-detectors? Beware! they may be in league with the Thought Eaters! ;)

The bit in ecology warning that this "genocide" of wolves "results in a marked increase in rodents and deer population that has nearly demolished the surrounding ecosystems" is also pretty hilarious. As if (a) the wolves were the primary predators of mice or (b) your average bunch of AD&D human(oid)s would have any difficulty (or lack of enthusiasm) about slaughtering some excess venison.

02-12-2010, 04:54 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

"Okay, here's the deal," said Maurice to the shivering ball in his claws. You only have to say something. Anything. 'Let me go,' maybe, or even 'Help!' *Squeak* does not cut the mustard. It's just a noise. Just ask, and I'll let you go. No one can say I'm not highly moral in that respect."

"Squeak!" screamed the mouse.

"Fair enough," said Maurice, and killed it instantly.

- *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*

02-12-2010, 04:58 AM

james1889

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Re. the 'Lucasfilm trademarked Nazis' thing - I seem to remember the true story behind it was that Lucasfilm had a little 'TM' sign on some cardstock figures, because the *images* were trademarked. But when you see the 'TM' sign next to some Nazis, it must be easy to leap to the wrong conclusion...

02-12-2010, 05:11 AM

Archer

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The bit in ecology warning that this "genocide" of wolves "results in a marked increase in rodents and deer population that has nearly demolished the surrounding ecosystems" is also pretty hilarious. As if (a) the wolves were the primary predators of mice or (b) your average bunch of AD&D human(oid)s would have any difficulty (or lack of enthusiasm) about slaughtering some excess venison.

I'm pretty sure real-world ecology can't really be applied to your average D&D world, which is generally a little top-heavy with apex predators. Where ecological principles do work, I see them working on a more personal level: You kill too many wolves, you risk pissing off some god or spirit, who registers a complaint with the local druid, who sends vermin to eat your village's crops.

02-12-2010, 05:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Oh, and here's another thing. I've long thought that in AD&D those goblin societies that have worg-riders the worg should usually be the higher ranking member of the partnership. An average worg is a lot tougher (AC 6, 3+3 HD, 2-8 damage) than most AD&D goblins will ever be, and in many cases is just as intelligent as its riders.

So, why not have a Land of the Pack, ruled over by great numbers of worgs, winter wolves, werewolves and wolfweres with their goblin slaves, who are mostly treated as disposable pairs of hands by their cruel lupine masters?

02-12-2010, 05:34 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wolf

Winter Wolf

As is often the case with PETA-girl inspired MM entries, the designers managed to sneak something past her iron-fisted censorship regime with this section, noting that a white wolf pelt is worth 5,000 gps, and that they have a "foul disposition".

Look, if you were a sapient being who for as long as your family can remember have been hunted by little 2-legged creatures who only want to kill you for your skin, you'd have a foul disposition too! Plus, you'd probably want to be pals with those nice big two-legged chaps with the frosty beards. Besides, as well as protecting you from humans, the frost giants let you share their glacier-castles during the bad warm seasons and go hunting with you.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

There is a 3.5 book from Distant Horizon that has winter wolves that adopt humans into their pack. They make a few minor magical alterations but for the most part the humans are simply poorly treated members that have the advantage of being able to buy supplies from local towns. They may be evil but then the wolves have a stake in the survival of said towns and it gets interesting on that dynamic.

For another interpretation of Winter Wolf society, have a look at this ***Ecology of the Winter Wolf*** article by Johnathan Richards. It was written to submit to Dragon, but the magazine rejected it, so Mr Richards posted it on Enworld for all the world to enjoy.

The winter wolves' society is pretty much the same as real-world wolves, just a bit more brutal, but it's well worth a read.

02-12-2010, 05:42 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Archer**

I'm pretty sure real-world ecology can't really be applied to your average D&D world, which is generally a little top-heavy with apex predators. Where ecological principles do work, I see them working on a more personal level: You kill too many wolves, you risk pissing off some god or spirit, who registers a complaint with the local druid, who sends vermin to eat your village's crops.

Well that's a large part of what I find hilarious about some of the AD&D monster's ecology entries. I'd be a lot happier if they provided a more fantastical reason for why wolf-genocide brings ruination upon those who perpetuated than having an untenable pseudo-scientific explanation.

Having various spirits of nature (plus their creatures and servants) protect wild places and their life is quite reasonable in context, or at least it better caters to my tastes.

02-12-2010, 09:33 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Strangething**

Aren't Worgs medium sized? That's a mighty big seeing eye dog!

Same size as a "riding dog", so a Great Dane, Saint Bernard or mastiff. On the big side, but not unheard of.

02-12-2010, 10:31 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

As if (a) the wolves were the primary predators of mice or

There was (and possibly still is) a myth floating around that wolves mostly eat mice. Clearly PETA girl bought into this.

02-12-2010, 05:24 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

There was (and possibly still is) a myth floating around that wolves mostly eat mice. Clearly PETA girl bought into this.

The mouse scene from Never Cry Wolf probably fed this.

02-13-2010, 07:34 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

There was (and possibly still is) a myth floating around that wolves mostly eat mice. Clearly PETA girl bought into this.

It's not that I was thinking wolves don't eat mice, it's that surely far more mice are eaten by smaller predators (snakes, owls, mustelids, cats et cetera) so removing the wolves from the equation would have little or no impact on the mouse population...

...well, unless The Gods Are Angered.:mad:

Of course, if they anger the Cat God, they're going to be in for it.;)

Although come to think of it, I remember watching a documentary with a family of wolves who's a diet was mostly lemmings, so maybe PETA-girl just picked the wrong rodent....:cool:

02-14-2010, 03:23 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

It's not that I was thinking wolves don't eat mice, it's that surely far more mice are eaten by smaller predators (snakes, owls, mustelids, cats et cetera) so removing the wolves from the equation would have little or no impact on the mouse population...

Predator-prey relationships get way complex when dealing with ecosystems rather than two species.

Removing the top predator means all the secondary predators that it liked to eat suddenly have less attrition, and so they quickly eat out their prey (lets assume it's mice at this level). Then the secondary predators start starving and lots die, and the mice, with the ability to breed like, well, rabbits (even better, actually) form a plague as the population explodes from a very low number, as there are fewer predators to keep their numbers down.

They eventually starve too, or the predators thrive on a bountiful squeaking food source.

Usually there's a gap between the steps here, so killing all the wolves might lead to a yo-yoing boom and bust in mice, until another top predator moves in...

02-14-2010, 05:58 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wolfwere

I have a strong feeling of deja vu about the Wolfwere - obviously because, let's face it, we've already done the Jackalwere entry and there isn't much to choose between the two creatures. (I'm sure they could have just made a single "-were" entry.) The Wolfwere is more powerful and uses singing rather than a magical gaze to ensnare prey, but the basic idea is the same.

That said, I do rather like the idea of this sort of creature - it has a nice fairy tale vibe to it which makes it feel more Arthurian than High Fantasy. This includes a weakness for cold iron and wolfsbane, and a rather Brothers Grimm sort of *modus operandi*. The problems associated with it are age-old, however: any player worth his salt will be instinctively suspicious of a wandering pilgrim or minstrel absent mindedly playing a lute, because he will have read the Monstrous Manual many times. It takes a lot of subtlety and effort on the part of the DM to make a Wolfwere a genuine surprise.

Wolfweres like to hang out with worgs or wolves, and their influence makes their pack "far more vicious and evil than they would normally be". This is an obvious adventure hook if ever there was one - wolves (which as we know normally only eat mice) in the local area are becoming more vicious and violent, if only some brave adventurers would find out the reason why, etc. etc. Wolfweres also despise Werewolves and vice versa, though the reason isn't even hinted at; nary a speculating sage in sight!

02-14-2010, 07:46 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The relationship between Lycanthropes and Antherions does seem to be one plot hook that's never been properly expanded upon, and could lead to quite a cool campaign. They have an interesting savagery/seduction and monster I am vs monster I become axis. Why should the Baatezu and Tanar'ri get all the competing factions of evil fun? Throw in nonshapeshifting anthropomorphic animals like Rakasta, Lupins, etc as the third point of the axis and I think we have a pretty cool potential base to build off.

02-14-2010, 09:51 PM

Thane of Fife

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The lethargy ability is a bit disappointing - I would probably prefer to use it as some sort of plot effect combined with a delayed slow spell - once you realize that things are wrong, it takes you those 5-8 rounds to shrug off the sleepiness. Then I'd

be tempted to use a werewolf as a player already in an inn when the PCs get there, or some such.

In other news, what other kinds of antherions could we have? Doing some wiki-ing, I found this:

Quote:

Ancient teachings held that every race except the Han Chinese were really animals in disguise

and

Quote:

In Thailand the tiger that eats many humans may become a weretiger.

Those are some plot hooks right there.

02-15-2010, 06:43 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Predator-prey relationships get way complex when dealing with ecosystems rather than two species.

Removing the top predator means all the secondary predators that it liked to eat suddenly have less attrition, and so they quickly eat out their prey (lets assume it's mice at this level). Then the secondary predators start starving and lots die, and the mice, with the ability to breed like, well, rabbits (even better, actually) form a plague as the population explodes from a very low number, as there are fewer predators to keep their numbers down.

They eventually starve too, or the predators thrive on a bountiful squeaking food source.

Usually there's a gap between the steps here, so killing all the wolves might lead to a yo-yoing boom and bust in mice, until another top predator moves in...

Those are all very good points, so I'll happily concede that my initial hilarity about wolf genocide causing mouse plagues may be a bit misplaced, since real life can get a lot more complicated.

That said, I haven't heard of wolves going out of their way to kill small predators that would compete with them for mice (like, say Iberian lynxes, which I've heard will kill any other little carnivore that intrudes into their territory), and most of the mouse-sized population explosions I've heard of are due to an abundance of food (often part of a boom-bust cycle based on the lemmings or whatever stripping the land of vegetation, dying off, then booming again when the plants grow back). I suspect that since small rodents tend to breed far faster than their predators, carnivory is rarely the major factor keeping their population down, food supply and rivalry from other plant eaters is probably more important - although, as you pointed out if their rival herbivores have a population boom due to a lack of wolves it can have a knock-on effect.

Besides, an absence of wolves causing rabbit or deer plagues is far more believable, to my ignorant tastes.

02-15-2010, 07:16 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

[U][SIZE="5"]That said, I do rather like the idea of this sort of creature - it has a nice fairy tale vibe to it which makes it feel more Arthurian than High Fantasy. This includes a weakness for cold iron and wolfsbane, and a rather Brothers Grimm sort of *modus operandi*. The problems associated with it are age-old, however: any player worth his salt will be instinctively suspicious of a wandering pilgrim or minstrel absent mindedly playing a lute, because he will have read the Monstrous Manual many times. It takes a lot of subtlety and effort on the part of the DM to make a Wolfwere a genuine surprise.

That was certainly my experience the sole time I use a wolfwere. The players were suspicious of them from the first.

The obvious solution is to hide the wolfwere amongst normal humans.

On trade routes you could have the player's meet many small bands of "random ordinary encounters", some of which might be wolfweres or the like, although this might stretch credibility in certain terrains ("What, *another* small band of unarmed cobblers travelling by themselves through a monster-infested wilderness? What's going on here!").

Alternatively, your shapeshifting monstrosities join a larger band of mundane travellers and try to lure some or all of the to their death - say, an attractive young wolfweress asks a young man to secretly meet her in the bushes one night, and the pack have a feast.

Besides, we might be approaching this the wrong way - perhaps the party are hired to find out who (or rather, what) is causing the disappearance of travellers on the Old East Road. They might even be told wolfweres are responsible by a surviving eye-witness, so they're perfectly entitled to be suspicious of strangers.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wolfweres like to hang out with worgs or wolves, and their influence makes their pack "far more vicious and evil than they would normally be". This is an obvious adventure hook if ever there was one - wolves (which as we know normally only eat mice) in the local area are becoming more vicious and violent, if only some brave adventurers would find out the reason why, etc. etc. Wolfweres also despise Werewolves and vice versa, though the reason isn't even hinted at; nary a speculating sage in sight!

Yes, the wolfwere vs werewolf antipathy is curious. Perhaps its just the normal rivalry between two species competing for the same niche (shapechanging human eater) or there could be more to it...

The werewolves are just plain jealous - wolfweres are smarter (High to exceptional), tougher (AC3 & 5+1 HD), taller (up to 7') and more charismatic (they've got wonderful singing voices!), so they got all the tail at the Shapechangers' Jamboree. The werewolves just huddled in the corner and seethed with jealousy while all the weretigresses clustered around that "bad boy" with his lute.

The wolfwere came first. It is a natural shapeshifter, created by a cruel god of the wild to control the burgeoning population of humans. The werewolf is a crude imitation of it, which is bad enough, but worse is that lycanthropy is *infectious*. If they didn't destroy werewolves on sight they could transform or devour the entire human population, which would destroy the very purpose for which they were made and replace the Human Threat with an even worse one.*

*Speaking of which, imagine an AD&D Land of the Weres were infectious therianthropy ran out of control - I wonder how a civilization of AD&D lycanthropes would work out. Most likely it would be evil (since the few good werebeasts are not prone to infect others), but could it be stable? Would they have a caste-system based on the weres' animal form? (Rats as the proletariat, Sharks as the sailors, Wolves as the soldiers, et cetera)

02-15-2010, 07:19 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Iberian lynxes, which I've heard will kill any other little carnivore that intrudes into their territory

I recently read *Where the Wild Things Were*, a book about top predators and how their absence affects the food web. One place where wolves do destroy smaller predators with a vengeance is Yellowstone- they knocked down the coyote population soon after being reintroduced.

And one weird tidbit was the extinction of black bears on an island because of introduced deer. The deer stripped the land of pretty much everything the bears ate (esp some species of berries).

02-15-2010, 08:13 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Yes, the wolfwere vs werewolf antipathy is curious. Perhaps its just the normal rivalry between two species competing for the same niche (shapechanging human eater) or there could be more to it...

The werewolves are just plain jealous - wolfweres are smarter (High to exceptional), tougher (AC3 & 5+1 HD), taller (up to 7') and more charismatic (they've got wonderful singing voices!), so they got all the tail at the Shapechangers' Jamboree. The werewolves just huddled in the corner and seethed with jealousy while all the weretigresses clustered around that "bad boy" with his lute.

The wolfwere came first. It is a natural shapeshifter, created by a cruel god of the wild to control the burgeoning population of humans. The werewolf is a crude imitation of it, which is bad enough, but worse is that lycanthropy is *infectious*. If they didn't destroy werewolves on sight they could transform or devour the entire human population, which would destroy the very purpose for which they were made and replace the Human Threat with an even worse one.*

Now you've got me thinking of the relationship between the Kuei-Jin and Kindred in the oWoD. The capability to multiply rapidly, albeit in a hard to control fashion beats a modest amount of individual superiority handily. Dwarves vs Orcs, Solars vs Dragon-blooded, it's one of those dramatic patterns that works very well.

Quote:

*Speaking of which, imagine an AD&D Land of the Weres where infectious therianthropy ran out of control - I wonder how a civilization of AD&D lycanthropes would work out. Most likely it would be evil (since the few good werebeasts are not prone to infect others), but could it be stable? Would they have a caste-system based on the weres' animal form? (Rats as the proletariat, Sharks as the sailors, Wolves as the soldiers, et cetera)

Way ahead of you. This is the basis for one of the continents in my gameworld based on all the Dragon Magazine stuff.

The rough progression involved some serious population crashes and internicene paranoia as lycanthropy initially spread, followed by a descent into tribalism, as even infected lycanthropes tend to run in packs, so there would be definite safety in associating with people who changed at the same time as you and had your back

while you're vulnerable.

By the time natural lycanthropes started outnumbering the infected ones (which results in an interesting family dynamic, as it means the kids wind up in control of the parents at that time of the month), a few generations later, trusting no-one outside your immediate family group had become standard.

After that, there was some reestablishment of friendly relations and trade, but the different environmental and dietary requirements of different werespecies kept large scale civilisations from forming again. There is a bit of the respect for nature stuff that you see in W:tA, but it's more a tendency to try and encourage the kinds of environments that are good for them in particular. This means that there is quite a bit of enemy of my enemy based alliances, with the simultaneous issue of competing with other species that occupy the same environment, but different niches, and setting boundaries between territories occupied by creatures adapted to different environments.

There also developed a fairly strong prejudice against mixed "race" breeding, which also didn't help in terms of integration. (IMG, the offspring have a 25% chance of taking after one parent or the other, being just a normal human, which is a very serious disadvantage when everyone else is immune to nonmagical weapons, or being some kind of weird hybrid, (crapshoot of if it's deformed and nonviable or super twinkled with the best abilities of both animal species.))

This resulted in a very definite Points of light situation. Not all the technology was lost, although there are certain individuals who want to embrace their animalistic side and leave all that behind, but with little trust between species, and dozens of different wereraces out there, the base of sentient creatures is a lot more fragmented than usual, and getting all the raw materials for certain things became an issue. This problem is gradually decreasing over time, as the new ecology works itself out, and the numbers of lycanthropes increase. (after all, the initial population crash left big areas of fertile but uninhabited land to be retaken.)

You probably would see mixed communities develop eventually, (and of course, adventuring parties regularly violate these kinds of rules to their benefit, as being able to fill lots of different niches is a huge advantage for them) but they are going to be fraught with class tension, and outbursts of tavern brawls, gang violence, and similar unpleasantness would be several orders of magnitude greater than in human settlements, as lycanthropes are noted for their temper control issues. Large cities of anything other than wererats, or maybe wereravens at a pinch, seems unlikely. Course, if they can offer substantial benefits in terms of comforts of civilisation, they might get a decent smattering of immigrants from other werespecies employed in niches where their abilities are useful, but it'd still be a violence prone place, full of racial tensions, quite possibly legally enforced segregation, and decidedly tenuous rule of law, given the tendencies towards chaos and evil of many of the races. Perfect place for adventurers, really. :p

02-16-2010, 08:11 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The mouse scene from Never Cry Wolf probably fed this.

Never Cry Wolf (the book originally) is the original source of this, in fact.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

That said, I haven't heard of wolves going out of their way to kill small predators that would compete with them for mice (like, say Iberian lynxes, which I've heard will kill any other little carnivore that intrudes into their territory)

As DMH mentioned above, wolves kill coyotes, at least in western North America. (Coyotes and wolves never really overlapped much in eastern North America, as coyotes only expanded their range eastward after wolves were mostly wiped out.)

02-16-2010, 06:12 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Worm

A bit of a grab-bag of monsters, this one, connected only by body shape. (The MM helpfully explains that all worms are "all burrowers with long, cylindrical shapes.") I find it mildly surprising that such an iconic D&D monsters as the Purple Worm should not have its own entry, but that's by the by.

Purple Worm

One of those rare beasts that can truly KILL an adventurer, without any hope for resurrection, the Purple Worm is always a scary proposition. It also has one of my favourite D&D cliches - the swallowed-character-cutting-his-way-out-of-a-gargantuan-monster routine - so it's an all round good egg in my view.

Purple worms are carnivorous but the entry also states that they consume vast amounts of material as they burrow through the earth - which then just sits inside the creature's belly until excreted when the creature returns to its lair. In which case, where is the room in the belly for adventurers? And doesn't this mean that a Purple Worm can only really travel the length of itself before it gets full of soil and has to return home? One of those cases where you just shouldn't think too deeply, I suppose.

There are two subvarieties:

Mottled Worm - an aquatic variety inhabiting "shallow bottom muck" (I love that - sounds like a variety of turd.)

Thunderherder - very small cousins of the Purple Worm (5-10 feet long rather than 150) who cause no damage other than creating earthquake-like movements underfoot.

Giant Bloodworm

Basically a giant leech, this, which bites and attaches itself to its victims. It can only be removed on an Open Doors roll - now *that's* what I call exception based design.

Bookworm

No, not somebody who reads lots of books, but a worm that lives in libraries. Oh, my aching sides. The fact that it's just a bad pun aside, I quite like the idea - nothing like the look on a player's face when their mage character pulls a rare spellbook from a shelf and finds a great big bite mark where the 'wish' spell should be.

Rot Grub

A nasty little beggar which burrows into the skin and takes 1d3 turns to reach the heart (!). There's a decent chance the victim won't even notice this happening (requires a Wisdom check) and after 1d6 rounds they burrow too deep to be killed by anything but a *cure disease* spell. This makes them one of the meanest creatures in the entire MM, I think, at least relative to XP gained from killing one.

02-16-2010, 07:13 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I've always been a little disappointed that you can't produce *potions of longevity* from the carcass of a purple worm. That'd spice the game up!

I believe that both bookworms and rot grubs were designed to be specialized "screw you!" monsters. The former are the DM's best friend when he decides that the party's wizard has gotten too many, or too problematic spells. Just unleash the little critters on him, and let them eat the offending spellbook! Cue hilarity, and the wizard transporting his new spellbook in airtight, mothball-filled locked steel box... :D

Rot grubs, on the other hand, are there to discourage the compulsive looters. You know the type - when they kill an orc in a 10' by 10' room, they take the pie he was guarding, the orc's armor and weapons, pull his teeth, break up the furniture to see if anything was hidden in hollow table legs, pry up the flagstones, look into the chimney, look through the trash... "You sort through the orc's rubbish, hoping to find something valuable. Roll a Wisdom check! Oh, you failed? Well, it's nothing, go on, I'm sure you've got some more implausible places to look for gold left..."

02-16-2010, 07:36 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Purple worms are carnivorous but the entry also states that they consume vast amounts of material as they burrow through the earth - which then just sits inside the creature's belly until excreted when the creature returns to its lair. In which case, where is the room in the belly for adventurers? And doesn't this mean that a Purple Worm can only really travel the length of itself before it gets full of soil and has to return home? One of those cases where you just shouldn't think too deeply, I suppose.

No, it makes sense. But you first have to understand that their lair isn't the topsoil, the Underdark, the earth's crust, or even the mantle. It's the elemental plane of earth.

The astral used to be just chock-full of planes. You couldn't travel more than a few minutes before bumping into a color pool.

Then the worms came. They ate... everything. The earth and stone, the pesky drow and aboleth. Then they burst from below, and swallowed the forests. Consumed the plains. Ingested the tundra. Then the sky, and finally, the plane itself. All gone.

That's why the elemental plane of earth is just packed full of... well, worm poop actually. Or the consumed remains of an infinite number of planes, to be more delicate.

The few remaining Material Planes are in hiding. Weeks of travel apart. Hoping they'll be missed. Hoping that no purple worm will find them. Because if you see one... well, it's never just one. Time to *plane shift* away. Your world is doomed.

The worms? They're not really worms. They're really appendages. The sprawling, grasping limbs of the elemental plane of earth. Made of pure astral-stuff, condensed. That's why they're purple. It's the color you get when you squish down all the silver into something solid. The bodies we see, more than a hundred feet long, are just the final protrusion. The bits that stick out, the heads of the vacuum. The rest spins and spirals away, into the depths of the astral.

Wormholes? Some are innocent. Planar travelers, demon lords, that kind of thing. Merely localized destruction. But some are the nether ends of the purple-nosed worms, funneling infinities of substance and matter back to the plane of material greed.

And watch out. Creating wormholes sometimes attracts them. Planar travel is dangerous, yes. But to the plane or origin itself, as much as the traveler.

02-16-2010, 10:51 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Huh, I assumed bookworms were actual creatures, though not necessarily as vicious as the ones in D&D. That wouldn't make them puns. Now, when I made a dragon statue that guards libraries and called it the bookwyrm, THAT'S a pun! :)

02-17-2010, 01:29 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

Way ahead of you. This is the basis for one of the continents in my gameworld based on all the Dragon Magazine stuff.

SNIP

I was thinking of something more civilized and less primal than that, a society made up of many races of werecreatures rather than a land where each were-race keeps mostly to its own little community.

The best example (indeed the only) example I can think of offhand is the lycanthrope magocracy in Paul Kearney's Monarchies of God series, although the werecreatures in that have some differences from the AD&D version.

An AD&D "Land of the Werebeasts" would presumably be a very fractious society, since so many of its members are Chaotic and/or Evil in alignment, but if a bunch of drow can manage it, why not a bunch of malevolent shapeshifters. I'm imagining the behind-the-scenes efforts of the sizable population of wererats would help keep things running.

Of course, if an all-werebeast population seems too much, maybe the majority of the population are normal humanoids and only the ruling caste are werecreatures - hereditary shapeshifters such as wolfweres might make more sense for that than infectious lycanthropes. Then each type of werecreature could be its own "House", with its own lands and centre of power, who all meet in a Parliament of the Beasts to haggle out national policy.

02-17-2010, 02:07 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Purple worms are carnivorous but the entry also states that they consume vast amounts of material as they burrow through the earth - which then just sits inside the creature's belly until excreted when the creature returns to its lair. In which case, where is the room in the belly for adventurers? And doesn't this mean that a Purple Worm can only really travel the length of itself before it gets full of soil and has to return home? One of those cases where you just shouldn't think too deeply, I suppose.

Clearly the Purple Worm magically shrinks the earth it swallows and excretes it as small, superdense pellets or as a superstrong deposit on the tunnel walls, or transforms a large portion of it into gas (maybe breathable air?).

I am sure you have noticed that a vast quantity of the underground in AD&D is riddled with tunnels and openings, as well as vast caverns. The spoil from all those excavations either has to go somewhere else or

be *shrunk*.

It's the Purple Worms that are ultimately responsible for much of the underdark's cavities.

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Rot Grub

A nasty little beggar which burrows into the skin and takes 1d3 turns to reach the heart (!). There's a decent chance the victim won't even notice this happening (requires a Wisdom check) and after 1d6 rounds they burrow too deep to be killed by anything but a *cure disease* spell. This makes them one of the meanest creatures in the entire MM, I think, at least relative to XP gained from killing one.

Did they have the anaesthetizing venom in 1st edition? I don't remember it from the original ***Monster Manual***. Certainly, the few times I had players encounter them, if someone was unlucky enough to get 'sprung' by a Rotgrub they'd certainly feel it chewing its way into their flesh - cue screams of "fetch the torch!".

Rot grubs are one of those "one trick" monsters that are little more than organic traps, like green slime or brown mold. I never used them much, since I prefer a monster with more versatility. Give me a Mimic anytime, you can do a lot more with one of those; why, the PCs can even try to talk to them.

Still, there are uses for the humble Rot Grub. They could make an excellent weapon, and would probably be safer to store and transport than the classic Flask of Green Slime. Not to mention they could be farmed for their pain-numbing saliva, although "milking" them might be a bit tricky.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**
Rot grubs, on the other hand, are there to discourage the compulsive looters. You know the type - when they kill an orc in a 10' by 10' room, they take the pie he was guarding, the orc's armor and weapons, pull his teeth, break up the furniture to see if anything was hidden in hollow table legs, pry up the flagstones, look into the chimney, look through the trash... "You sort through the orc's rubbish, hoping to find something valuable. Roll a Wisdom check! Oh, you failed? Well, it's nothing, go on, I'm sure you've got some more implausible places to look for gold left..."

Either that, or it's an Evil DM running a party through The Sewers of Doom.

02-20-2010, 06:11 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wraith

There's something rather halfhearted about the Wraith entry, but I can't quite put my finger on what. For starters the Wraith is incredibly close to the Wight, right down to the same motivation (hatred of life), same origin (Negative Material Plane), same habitat (tombs and graves), same dislikes (bright light) and the same abilities (level drain) with the same consequences (enslavement). Even their comparative power levels are much of a muchness. Coming hot on the heels of the Wight in alphabetical terms as it does, the Wraith just comes across as a cheap copy.

Moreover the entry itself is very cursory, with none of the obscure and half-mad origin theories and bizarre speculations of sages that we have come to expect from our friend the MM. About the closest we come to such a thing is this sentence: "A

character who becomes a wraith is nearly impossible to recover, requiring a special quest." But even that is lifted directly from the Wight entry. Aside from that we just get a rather drab retread of what we already know or expect (Wraiths are immune to normal weapons and *sleep* spells, etc. etc.).

Stop me if I'm wrong, but there is strong precedent in fantasy literature (I believe some fellow called Tolkien wrote something or other that was pertinent) for a much more powerful, unique and frightening version of the Wraith than exists in the MM. Something that isn't just a Wight-except-immaterial.

That said, there is something rather compelling about a pack of Wraiths swooping in at unsuspecting travellers in the night like wolves, especially on a party of PCs who don't have silver or magical weapons. Depends on how much mileage ones group gets out of desperate fleeing, of course.

02-20-2010, 06:39 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yeah, like skeletons and zombies, and goblins/orcs/hobgoblins, the wight/wraith thing feels like a product of Gary's original need to create monsters for every HD niche (and in this case, slot on the cleric turning table) to scale neatly with the party. This resulted in quite a few very similar adjacent creatures.

02-21-2010, 02:08 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wraith

There's something rather halfhearted about the Wraith entry, but I can't quite put my finger on what. For starters the Wraith is incredibly close to the Wight, right down to the same motivation (hatred of life), same origin (Negative Material Plane), same habitat (tombs and graves), same dislikes (bright light) and the same abilities (level drain) with the same consequences (enslavement). Even their comparative power levels are much of a muchness. Coming hot on the heels of the Wight in alphabetical terms as it does, the Wraith just comes across as a cheap copy.

Same here, except I was thinking "Spectre Lite" rather than "Wight Max" the last time I read the Wraith entry, them both being incorporeal flying energy-sucking undead that are powerless in sunlight. Actually, "Spectre Lite" is basically how I imagined Wraiths - a slightly weaker Spectral creature that looks like a shadowy simulacrum or silhouette of its original, living form.

There does appear to be a difference in the two undead's modus operandi, though:

Spectres like to operate in secret and "rival vampires in their skill at remaining hidden from the general populace", and "remain highly intelligent and generally rational".

Wraiths "exist only to perpetuate evil by absorbing the life force of as many people as possible". They may be almost as intelligent as Spectres but seem to lack any purpose or desire besides killing.

That doesn't seem to be enough to justify making two different monsters.

Apart from that, I can only see a few minor points.

Firstly, and rather curiously, wraiths are always human - The Monstrous Manual says "A wraith is an undead spirit of a powerful, evil **human**" and "Any **human** killed by a wraith becomes a half-strength wraith". Spectres can turn "mortals" into more of their kind while Wights were once "persons", but Wraiths can only be created from one AD&D race.

- Is this due to some difference in the quality of the human soul or anima?
- Perhaps Wraiths are the result of a bungled attempt to create an immortal race of human spirit-beings?
-

Secondly, why did they specify that a wraith "cannot communicate, except through a *speak with dead* spell" and scorn (or flee from) attempts at communication. I believe AD&D Wights and Spectres are capable of speech, so does the "Wraith curse" deprive them of a voice?

Then again, I never could remember this fact and always imagined Wraiths as being capable of speaking in horrible, eerie voices, but prefer not to interact with the living except by sapping their lives.

02-23-2010, 12:24 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

If the Mottled Worm are as big as purple worms, that's some deep seabed mud....

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

An AD&D "Land of the Werebeasts" would presumably be a very fractious society, since so many of its members are Chaotic and/or Evil in alignment, but if a bunch of drow can manage it, why not a bunch of malevolent shapeshifters.

Of course, the drow get help from Lolth; is there a werebeast deity?

Quote:

I'm imagining the behind-the-scenes efforts of the sizable population of wererats would help keep things running.

Yeah, probably.

Quote:

Then each type of werecreature could be its own "House", with its own lands and centre of power, who all meet in a Parliament of the Beasts to haggle out national policy.

Cool!

02-23-2010, 01:19 AM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**

Of course, the drow get help from Lolth; is there a werebeast deity?

Just ones for the individual races. (per 2e's Monster Mythology) Having one god as a collective patron for all lycanthropes would probably help mitigate the fractiousness problem.

02-23-2010, 04:22 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Then again, I never could remember this fact and always imagined Wraiths as being capable of speaking in horrible, eerie voices, but prefer not to interact with the living except by sapping their lives.

They shout "Wooo!"

02-23-2010, 04:09 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **celebrityomnipath**

They shout "Wooo!"

That's ghosts. Sometimes followed by "I'm a ghooooooooost."

02-23-2010, 11:03 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

Just ones for the individual races. (per 2e's Monster Mythology) Having one god as a collective patron for all lycanthropes would probably help mitigate the fractiousness problem.

There was one in my last RPG campaign. Phellis Mune was once a LE were-dire leopard monk from the campaign before that, but in between the two campaigns he ascended to godhood and became the general patron of all lycanthropes. His lawful-ness was a guide to get other normally chaotic weres to organize. Of course, he was evil, so the more ethical lycanthropes still ignored him. He was the enemy for the penultimate adventure of that latter campaign as well; the only time he was EVER fought by either party!

02-25-2010, 04:07 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

Just ones for the individual races. (per 2e's Monster Mythology) Having one god as a collective patron for all lycanthropes would probably help mitigate the fractiousness problem.

Well there was that Sutherland cartoon in the 1E AD&D Dungeonmaster's Guide of showing a temple with wererats worshipping a Giant Rat Idol while a couple of adventures stand outside preparing to sneak in with the

aid of "mickey mouse" ears.

"This had better work!"

02-25-2010, 07:25 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wyvern

Do you pronounce 'Wyvern' like Wivvern, or Wai-vern? Just out of interest, as I've heard both.

Anyway, Wyverns - a stupid dragon without the magic or arms. What's not to like? They're a quintessential fantasy monster and perfect for a slaying. They also have a nice line in diving aerial attacks and instadeath poison, both of which are always welcome.

Somewhat disappointingly D&D Wyverns are not rideable like Warhammer ones are - or at least the entry doesn't mention them being ridden into battle by orc shamans, which is a pity. It's one of the best Warhammer tropes. We are compensated for this by the idea of groups of Wyverns cooperating with an evil dragon and being bossed around by the more powerful reptile - quite a nice middle-tier big baddie for a campaign, don't you think?

Rather intriguingly, we are told that "[c]ertain body parts [of Wyverns] are used by spell casters as spell components, for which they will pay a reasonable price", but the MM is uncharacteristically reticent about what these body parts may be and what spells they are used in. Sounds like a job for rpg.net...

02-25-2010, 08:34 PM

sim_james

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

There was the occasional riding wyvern in Dragonlance, from what I recall. That was pre-2nd edition.

02-25-2010, 09:34 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

What's not to like? Well, there is the traditional stupid pre-3rd ed save or die poison. I distinctly remember not liking that! :)

02-25-2010, 09:35 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

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Perhaps the body parts were too delicate to mention, and got nuked by the censors. After all, this is the era where nymphs and goddesses bundled up and demons and devils vanished and were replaced by look-a-likes with names that would make baby Tolkien cry.

02-25-2010, 09:37 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

What's not to like? Well, there is the traditional stupid pre-3rd ed save or die poison. I distinctly remember not liking that! :)

I love save or die. Nothing beats the suspense in the moment just before the dice falls.

02-25-2010, 11:09 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Perhaps the body parts were too delicate to mention, and got nuked by the censors. After all, this is the era where nymphs and goddesses bundled up and demons and devils vanished and were replaced by look-a-likes with names that would make baby Tolkien cry.

"You find a jar full of preserved wyvern testicles. It's worth 500 gp, all together."

"Ewww." :D

Also, the entry mentions that wyverns eat their whole prey, but bones and metals aren't digested... This seems to imply to me that they vomit these indigestibles like owls do, and that going through the rubbish beneath a wyvern aerie might be a lower-risk way of getting some treasure.

02-25-2010, 11:11 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Also, the entry mentions that wyverns eat their whole prey, but bones and metals aren't digested... This seems to imply to me that they vomit these indigestibles like owls do, and that going through the rubbish beneath a wyvern aerie might be a lower-risk way of getting some treasure.

Giant owl pellets that contain the bones, hair, armor and weapons of dead adventurers but nothing else is both awesomely creepy and an excellent place to leave some treasure in a wyvern lair for the PCs to find.

02-26-2010, 10:08 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Giant owl pellets that contain the bones, hair, armor and weapons of dead adventurers but nothing else is both awesomely creepy and an excellent place to leave some treasure in a wyvern lair for the PCs to find.

Oh, man, I'd hate to be the hirelings when the party catches up with that plan. It's searching monster poop for the rest of their lives. Dragon's lair? "Here, while we bring back the incredible hoard of gold, jewels, and magical treasure, you guys search through the guy's last meal and see if there's anything good." The otyughs would make them get therapy.

As for save or die, my party rolled like 20 1's in the last game, so I'm not so fond. I think the suspense would last exactly the one time it didn't work, and afterward I'd just make paper-thin characters so I wouldn't care when they inevitably died to things I couldn't control.

02-26-2010, 10:24 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Oh, man, I'd hate to be the hirelings when the party catches up with that plan. It's searching monster poop for the rest of their lives. Dragon's lair? "Here, while we bring back the incredible hoard of gold, jewels, and magical treasure, you guys search through the guy's last meal and see if there's anything good." The otyughs would make them get therapy.

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This isn't really the thread to discuss it, but I think judicious use of save-or-die monsters results in cautious and intelligent play, not paper-thin characters. Obviously you wouldn't want every encounter to be a Wyvern, Catoblepas or Cockatrice! ;)

02-26-2010, 10:37 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Oh, man, I'd hate to be the hirelings when the party catches up with that plan. It's searching monster poop for the rest of their lives. Dragon's lair? "Here, while we bring back the incredible hoard of gold, jewels, and magical treasure, you guys search through the guy's last meal and see if there's anything good." The otyughs would make them get therapy.

...and that, kiddies, is why the GM invented rot grubs.

02-26-2010, 11:43 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

...and that, kiddies, is why the GM invented rot grubs.

Amen.

02-27-2010, 02:47 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Wyvern

Do you pronounce 'Wyvern' like Wivvern, or Wai-vern? Just out of interest, as I've heard both.

According to the nearest dictionary I have to hand the name's derived from the Latin for a viper and the "Wy" includes a long "i" sound like the first syllable in "Wiper".

Which I found very reassuring, since that's how I pronounce it.:p

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

"You find a jar full of preserved wyvern testicles. It's worth 500 gp, all together."

"Ewww." :D

Also, the entry mentions that wyverns eat their whole prey, but bones and metals aren't digested... This seems to imply to me that they vomit these indigestibles like owls do, and that going through the rubbish beneath a wyvern aerie might be a lower-risk way of getting some treasure.

Great ideas!

Maybe add venom-sacs and ovaries to the list of valuable body-parts?

Hmm... venom sacs, love-sacs and regurgitated foecal-sacs - no wonder the sages of the Monstrous Compendium thought detailing a Wyvern's valuable parts was indelicate!

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

...and that, kiddies, is why the GM invented rot grubs.

I was thinking that too.:o

02-27-2010, 03:38 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

So what else is their to talk about the Wyvern entry? I'm struck by this bit:

Quote:

Only young wyverns attack others of their kind, usually to establish new territory. Older wyverns settle disputes in an unknown manner without actual combat.

Some wyverns have been known to work with evil dragons. Usually these dragons completely dominate the weaker and smaller wyverns.

See, once a wyvern establishes a territory it is approached by a dragon who makes it "an offer it can't refuse". It can either bow to the authority of "La Draco Nostra" or become one dead lizard. Older wyverns who have a dispute must approach their Dragon "Capo" to get it settled - or they become two dead lizards. The Wyvern doesn't get much out of this relationship except for occasional support against tough enemies, and it must give the dragon a tithe of their treasure "to show their respect" as well as keep its boss informed if it sees anything interesting in its territory.

The sages' claim that "If game is sparse, it will hunt with a small group of its own kind" is misleading, by the way. When there isn't enough food to go around, they spread out to hunt a wider area or seek a new territory. They don't gather together because there isn't enough food, but to attack tough opponents. If a Wyvern sees a tough but particularly juicy target, like a small caravan or adventuring party, they can inform their draconic boss, who may order a flight of wyverns to get together and make a hit.

02-27-2010, 03:44 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sim_james**

There was the occasional riding wyvern in Dragonlance, from what I recall. That was pre-2nd edition.

Yes, and I'm pretty sure there were mentions of Wyverns in mounts in some other AD&D products. I can't recall what the source was offhand (I think either a Dragon magazine or the 1E DMG) but I remember it saying such a Wyvern was "de-stingered" so it could not attack its rider with its tail.

02-27-2010, 10:45 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

...and that, kiddies, is why the GM invented rot grubs.

And that's the OTHER reason you make the hirelings do it. ;)

03-02-2010, 08:33 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Xorn

After a run of monsters which are a bit insipid, or old "standards", it's nice to come across one of your more WHATTHEFUCK style monsters in the Xorn, which really defies description:

Quote:

"The xorn (zorn) are natives to the elemental plane of Earth. The wide body of a xorn is made of a pebbly, stone-like material. It has a large, powerful mouth on top of its head with three long arms, tipped with sharp talons, symmetrically positioned every 120 degrees around it. Between the arms are large, stone-lidded eyes that see in all directions. At its base are three thick, short legs, each directly beneath an eye. The whole body is designed for burrowing, mouth first."

We are aided by one of Diterlizzi's fine offerings, which I always thought had a vaguely fishy look to it, which doesn't sit quite right with a burrowing monster and yet I now can't imagine any other way.

Xorn are at heart a dungeon ecology monster, which would not exist without adventurers. They may come from the elemental plane of earth in search of minerals, but what they really exist for is to try to get at treasure which is carried by adventuring parties - which they can smell from 20 feet away. Sometimes they will demand treasure in return for safe passage, and sometimes they will attack, but it doesn't really matter - they are a hurdle to throw in the way of your PCs, and there are no bones made about it.

And it's no bad thing. Escaping from a dungeon with loot should be hard, and obstacles should be thrown in the way of a "successful" party. Especially when it is pulled off with such gonzo finesse - Xorn are flailing, biting whirlygigs in a fight, who can pass through walls, disguise themselves as stone, and generally continue "guerilla warfare...indefinitely". And no DM will turn his nose up at that.

Adventure hooks also abound in the Xorn entry - not only could you have Xorn guarding parts of the dungeon and demanding treasure for passage (which naturally the PCs won't have, resulting in lengthy and dangerous detours) but you also have this source of conflict with the Dao, which is certainly something a group of PCs can get mixed up in.

Xaren

Xaren are basically Xorn, but they lust for magical treasure above all others. You can read this as a more blatant attempt on the part of the designers to get in the way of the PCs and also to cut them down to size by eating their precious magical items, à la rust monsters.

03-02-2010, 10:19 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

We are aided by one of Diterlizzi's fine offerings, which I always thought had a vaguely fishy look to it, which doesn't sit quite right with a burrowing monster and yet I now can't imagine any other way.

It works if you imagine them swimming through earth and rock!

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Pretty much so.

Have there been any noteworthy adventures that involve the Elemental Plane of Earth, by the way? Apart from the Great Dismal Delve and the Dao, the place seems rather, well, boring - it's a giant dungeon (or lack of dungeons which is even more boring) just like the Underdark, except it's harder to reach and has less interesting inhabitants.

03-02-2010, 10:28 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

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Pretty much so.

Have there been any noteworthy adventures that involve the Elemental Plane of Earth, by the way? Apart from the Great Dismal Delve and the Dao, the place seems rather, well, boring - it's a giant dungeon (or lack of dungeons which is even more boring) just like the Underdark, except it's harder to reach and has less interesting inhabitants.

I've often thought about setting a campaign in the Inner Planes, but never got round to it. I agree that is at stands most of them seem kind of dull, but on the flipside they're a blank canvas on which a DM can write almost anything.

03-03-2010, 12:02 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Have there been any noteworthy adventures that involve the Elemental Plane of Earth, by the way? Apart from the Great Dismal Delve and the Dao, the place seems rather, well, boring

The Planescape supplement on the Inner Planes tried real hard to make the Inner Planes more interesting. It was somewhat successful in this regard. I don't recall off the top of my head what happened in the Plane of Earth specifically, though. Definitely worth looking at, though.

03-03-2010, 12:33 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

The Planescape supplement on the Inner Planes tried real hard to make the Inner Planes more interesting. It was somewhat successful in this regard. I don't recall off the top of my head what happened in the Plane of Earth specifically, though. Definitely worth looking at, though.

The only PS book I own is the 3rd MC and it has lots of interesting inhabitants of the inner planes. The oddest one has to be shad- tiny humanoids evolved from insects grown on plants that druids introduced to the plane of earth (and watered from water and lit from radiance).

As for the xorn, I think they are interesting because they are near top level predators on the plane of earth. I don't remember if they feed on kargra (sp?) though.

03-03-2010, 12:48 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

The only PS book I own is the 3rd MC and it has lots of interesting inhabitants of the inner planes. The oddest one has to be shad- tiny humanoids evolved from insects grown on plants that druids introduced to the plane of earth (and watered from water and lit from radiance).

There's more on the Shad in the Inner Planes book, I believe.

For the xorn, I think that (as with many monsters of surprisingly high intelligence scores) you might get more mileage by thinking about them as NPCs instead of monsters. Xorns are as smart as human beings, so each xorn could have their own personality, goals and methods of achieving their goals. Maybe one xaren has learned to understand a human tongue (perhaps via telepathy or an interpreter) and so sits int he bazaar in the City of Brass or Waterdeep or Sigil and bargains for magic items in exchange for services.

Having a xorn on your side could be very useful for construction purposes. Perhaps that explains where all these dungeons come from: you just bribe a xorn with some gems and he digs you a nice underground maze to populate with monsters.

03-03-2010, 03:17 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Quote:

"The xorn (zorn) are natives to the elemental plane of Earth. The wide body of a xorn is made of a pebbly, stone-like material. It has a large, powerful mouth on top of its head with three long arms, tipped with sharp talons, symmetrically positioned every 120 degrees around it. Between the arms are large, stone-lidded eyes that see in all directions. At its base are three thick, short legs, each directly beneath an eye. The whole body is designed for burrowing, mouth first."

I always got the impression that the designers of the elemental natives were trying to create a fantasy version of an alien ecology -- and failing pretty badly. The trilateral symmetry is just one facet. This starts of course with the xorn, and continued through that appendix in the first Manual of the Planes and creatures like the tojanida and arrowhawks. The inner planes not only were monolithic and had ridiculous physical laws (subjective gravity?), but their inhabitants were an incoherent mish-mash -- with magical humanoids, animate chunks of the plane, and alien things all thrown together.

I think what they were trying for was something closer to Niven's *Integral Trees* and *Smoke Ring*. The two science fiction novels are set in a torus around a neutron star. Outer space, except filled with gas. No gravity, and everything moves, but unlike the inner planes it wasn't an undifferentiated mass. Empires grew up in the resource rich area toward the center, while isolated tribes lived in the thinner outer reaches. The miles-long trees in the title migrated across the torus as part of their lifecycle. The native lifeforms had evolved in zero- or micro-gravity, and mixed with the human colonists who had lost much of the technology of their ancestors and had adapted to their environment: For instance, the "jungle giants" who grew up in zero G were extremely elongated and had prehensile toes. A fantasy equivalent would make a great elemental plane of air.

03-03-2010, 05:34 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

As for the xorn, I think they are interesting because they are near top level predators on the plane of earth. I don't remember if they feed on kargra (sp?) though.

Going by their Monstrous Manual entry they're not "near top level predators", but the Earth-plane analogue of herbivores:

Quote:

Habitat/Society: A xorn is normally found on the elemental plane of Earth. It is only on the Prime Material plane if forcibly summoned or if it was the victim of an interplanar accident.

On their native plane, **xorn are as peaceful as Prime Material plane herbivores**. While xorn are intelligent, their society is limited to small clans of mineral gatherers. These clans wander from place to place, leaving behind open pockets where they have eaten out a vein of mineral. On the Prime Material plane they always seek wide regions of stone underground. What humans would consider treasures, xorn consider food. They keep their store of food in a nearby air pockets.

Ecology: On the Prime Material plane, they are visitors that serve no ecological function. On their own plane, **they are gatherers, eating only stone and minerals**. The empty pockets in the stone are quickly inhabited by various creatures of the plane. Dao have been known to hunt them for sport. Equally as often, xorn serve dao as slaves.

Which gives rise to a couple of question...

If Xorn are some sort of sapient herdbeast (imagine a trifoil stony gnu!), what Elemental Earth predator preys on them? The only predator that's mentioned are the dao who "hunt them for sport", but I'm sure there are huge and horrible burrowing *things* that prey on Xorn and lesser creatures of the earth.

If they enter the Prime Material through force or accident, most Xorn will be desperate to return home - surely there's an adventure idea in there:

A Xorn offers a band of adventurers a horde of platinum (since it's not much interested in none-gem treasure) in return for entering some horrible area of the Underdark to find her nest-mates and plane shift them all home. (Of course this can be expanded to a "rescue the Xorn from slavery" scenario).

Treasure is mysteriously vanishing from fortified, teleport-warded vaults. The thief is a Xorn, committing

robberies at the behest of an evil wizard who demands an extortionate fee to send it home.

The local magician accidentally summons a Xorn. The outraged creature demolished the mage's house, killing him, and is now running amoc. Can the players slay or banish it before the town is reduced to rubble?

03-03-2010, 05:45 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Xaren

Xaren are basically Xorn, but they lust for magical treasure above all others. You can read this as a more blatant attempt on the part of the designers to get in the way of the PCs and also to cut them down to size by eating their precious magical items, a la rust monsters.

Hmm, maybe Xaren aren't a separate species, but are Xorn junkies. The unhealthy sheen of their hide, slightly shrunken stature and insatiable cravings (for metal) are all symptoms of their addiction to enchanted metal.

That boost of strength from eating a *+1 dagger* may make the Xaren feel stronger, but like most addictions the long-term cost is far worse. Soon they "require magical metal to maintain their health" and even if they keep their habit supplied their constitutions eventually collapse under the strain, leaving them to die in twitching agony.

03-03-2010, 06:37 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
Going by their Monstrous Manual entry they're not "near top level predators", but the Earth-plane analogue of herbivores:

? They were predators before the MM and after it. The crysmal, from the 1e FF, mentions xorns prey on them.

As for what preys on them- trilling shards from mineral (and Dragon in the 170's) would make great top level predators for earth.

03-03-2010, 11:37 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**
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As for what preys on them- trilling shards from mineral (and Dragon in the 170's) would make great top level predators for earth.

True enough. I was only talking about the Xorn as depicted in the 2E Monstrous Compendium - which appear to me to be described as relatively peaceful gatherers who are occasionally forced into the Prime Material, where they are driven to rob creatures of their gems just to survive, and are often brutally hunted and enslaved by Dao.

The vibe I get from the 1E Monster Manual's Xorn was quite different. They appear to deliberately venture into dungeons to mug adventurers for their valuables, and I see them as being movers-and-shakers back on the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Funny what difference a bit of flavour text can make, isn't it.

03-04-2010, 02:03 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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That boost of strength from eating a *+1 dagger* may make the Xaren feel stronger, but like most addictions the long-term cost is far worse. Soon they "require magical metal to maintain their health" and even if they keep their habit supplied their constitutions eventually collapse under the strain, leaving them to die in twitching agony.

Ideas like this make me want to run a 4E campaign using all the silliest things we've come up with since the letter A. Xorn junkies, Will-O-Wisps that demand their rent, etc. :D

03-04-2010, 03:16 AM

Belchion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Xaren

Xaren are basically Xorn, but they lust for magical treasure above all others. You can read this as a more blatant attempt on the part of the designers to get in the way of the PCs and also to cut them down to size by eating their precious magical items, a la rust monsters.

Of course, this can also be used by adventurers to get rid of cursed items. There is this cursed portcullis that prevents you from entering the dungeon? Call a Xaren! I even could imagine circles of good spellcasters herding Xaren and sending adventurers around to gather cursed items for feeding them.

Of course, the question is, what happens to Xaren who eat cursed items - are they cursed or do they just find such items tasting horrible and upsetting their stomach?

03-05-2010, 11:52 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Belchion**

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Of course, the question is, what happens to Xaren who eat cursed items - are they cursed or do they just find such items tasting horrible and upsetting their stomach?

That's an easy question to answer.

You know how some cursed weapons in AD&D have a minus to hit and damage instead of a plus?

A Xaren adds the magical bonus of an enchanted weapon it devours to its hit points, but if it eats a cursed weapon "negative bonus" (literally and/or metaphysically) it may become an Undead Xaren, sometimes called a Mali-Xaren.

These fearsome undead retain a living Xaren's lust for magical metal and have a range of uncanny powers. All have energy drain like a wight or vampire, and in addition they have magical powers derived from the cursed metal that created them. For example, a Xaren which eats a *backbiter* spear is able to reflect missile attacks back onto its attackers, one that ate a *berserker* sword can enter a murderous frenzy, and so on and so forth.

03-08-2010, 06:58 AM

Vultur10

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

There's more on the Shad in the Inner Planes book, I believe.

Shad? Seriously?

Why would they name an *Earth*-elemental being after a kind of fish? A water-elemental would be more appropriate ;)

03-08-2010, 06:46 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yeti

A new entry, a new befuddling throwaway line: "Sometimes confused with the abominable snowman, the yeti is a distant cousin to the great carnivorous apes of warmer climates." Sometimes confused with the abominable snowman? Is the writer saying that Yetis and abominable snowmen are different things? In which case, where is the MM entry for the abominable snowman, dammit?

Anyway, the Yeti is a likeable creature - I have a great fondness for monstrous apes - although I have to say, I'm puzzled as to why the designers made it an arctic monster given that our real-world Yeti is supposed to live in a tropical mountain region. Nevertheless, the Yeti has quite a few fun special abilities which make up for this, including an eyes-which-paralyse-prey-with-fright trick and the ability to hug-to-freeze. A Yeti ambush is a genuinely nasty surprise for the unsuspecting party, and makes for a nice king-kong style fight.

Yeti are of average intelligence, although why they need to be is not really clear - they live in family groups, have no civilization, and don't make anything. I imagine that being of average intelligence and yet lacking any way of expressing that intelligence would be a somewhat boring and unfulfilling existence. Perhaps Yetis philosophize or write poetry to pass the cold lonely evenings.

Yeti claws and teeth are worth a gold piece each, though the hide is worth 300. A decent earner, really.

03-08-2010, 07:32 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yeti are of average intelligence, although why they need to be is not really clear - they live in family groups, have no civilization, and don't make anything. I imagine that being of average intelligence and yet lacking any way of expressing that intelligence would be a somewhat boring and unfulfilling existence. Perhaps Yetis philosophize or write poetry to pass the cold lonely evenings.

Not necessarily.

Perhaps they're more like fey. They might live in solely the *moment*. All they'd care about is the roaring and the chest-beating.

After all, intelligence is a tool, a key. Not a motivation. Intellect doesn't tell us what to do; our needs and wants are still wired to our instincts. What we do with the intelligence -- even knowledge and wisdom and speech, if we take the pre-modern view and assume some of those characteristics are as innate as teeth or magic in fabulous beasts -- is based on our hindbrain urges.

Not every smart beast has to be a gregarious beast with elaborate social rituals that develops incredibly convoluted societies. Nor do they have to have the endless curiosity about wonders like the unfolding possibilities of technology, or magic. Not all intelligent beings have to have overdeveloped empathy, a fear of being alone, a love of art.

The yeti might be very intelligent, if conversed with. But perhaps their eyes are always to the wind and their feet itch for the path that takes them over the next summit, then the next. They savor the blood of their prey, and the act of ripping them apart, more than they do cities and culture.

03-09-2010, 04:51 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

You know, Alexander the Great fought a yeti once. True story. True-ish, anyway.

Yetis survive the cold via their unusual fur. This suggests to me "Yeti fur coat". Maybe just a few fur coats for the PCs to wear as they journey into the Elemental Plane of Ice. Or maybe a village that survives the freezing cold by slaughtering yetis for their fur. Or maybe it just means their pelt can be sold back at town for 300 gp, just like the entry later says.

Yetis have a second eyelid for protecting against blowing snow. good luck building a plot based on that datum.

One wonders why, exactly, the yeti's blue eyes are so terrifying.

03-09-2010, 11:01 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Wait, yeti are supposed to live in a tropical mountain region? Where? Is it possible you're thinking about Bigfoot? I know a lot of fiction merge Bigfoot, Yeti, AND the Abominable Snowman into a singular race, but the text implies that the Bigfoot is the distant cousin they're talking about. Though that could just be the Carnivorous Ape I think we covered earlier. At this point, all I can think of when I think of Yeti are the Darkstalker character and that Sam and Max game. Though if the Yeti really are intelligent, and villages are slaughtering for their coats, that could be a disturbing adventure hook right there.

03-09-2010, 11:29 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Vultur10**
Shad? Seriously?

Why would they name an *Earth*-elemental being after a kind of fish? A water-elemental would be more appropriate ;)

My suspicion is their creator had never heard of the fish, and just thought "shad" would be a cool name. I wonder whether they created it by dropping the "r" from "shard"?

Although we could postulate there's some aspect of their earth elemental that resembles a shad, let me think now...

A shad is a saltwater fish that breeds in freshwater, like a salmon.

A shad-fly is another word for a mayfly, an insect that breeds in freshwater and lives in the air.

So, maybe the elemental shad is also a creature of two worlds. The adults spend their lives burrowing-swimming through the solid matter of the Elemental Plane of Earth, but they migrate into the Elemental Plane of Water to breed. It's just that the eponymous sages have yet to realize their tiny, fish-like spawn are not a tiny breed of Water Elemental.

03-10-2010, 12:08 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yeti

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Yes, that first line really threw me too. As far as I know, there's no "Abominable Snowman" anywhere in the official corpus of 2nd edition AD&D monsters...

which just means we'll have to come up with one ourselves!

Hmm...

An Abominable Snowman looks very much like a Yeti, explaining why the two creatures are so often confused. It is more upright in posture and domed of brow than a Yeti. In habits and abilities they are quite different.

They are **Abominable** - there is something unutterably detestable and terrifying about the appearance of these creatures, causing people to flee at the sight of them. Abominable Snowmen possess a variety of uncanny powers, possibly psionic in origin, that allow them to turn invisible, impose fearsome curses and dominate the wills of other creatures.

They have a mastery of **Snow** - As well as the aforementioned powers, Abominable Snowmen have an ability to manipulate frozen water in all its forms. A group of Snowfolk can summon blizzards and avalanches, mold a glacier into a hidden temple-fortress of ice (their preferred dwelling place) and create weapons out of ice as hard as steel.

They are **Manlike** - unlike Yeti, the Abominable Snowmen are sociable creatures possessing the arts and crafts of civilization, albeit a civilization built of crafted snow. These creatures are secretive to an obsessive, virtually paranoid extent, and shun dealings with non-snowmen - or at least, they avoid *obvious* dealings with other sapients. There are persistent rumours that many of the human monasteries in the frozen mountains are ruled by hidden Snowmen Abbots who use their powers to manipulate the races of warmer lands, some say they are "Secret Masters" who control entire kingdoms.

...Now I'm tempted to write up their AD&D stats.

03-10-2010, 12:19 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**
Not necessarily.

Perhaps they're more like fey. They might live in solely the *moment*. All they'd care about is the roaring and the chest-beating.

SNIP

That's pretty much it, except for the importance of environment on these creatures' intelligence. See, the aforementioned Abominable Snowman and the Yeti are two sides of the same species. During interglacial periods most of the Snowfolk develop into Yeti, except for a few clusters in rare mountain peaks where the elements conspire to awaken their Abominability.

But when the Great Freeze comes and a new ice-age rolls down from the North, the arctic Yeti of those realms become highly intelligent Abominable Snowmen, who quickly form a psychic connection with their mountain cousins and unite forces to build a world-spanning Abominable Empire.

Then the cycle turns and the ice-age recedes, the Ice Palaces and Artifacts of the Snowfolk melt away and their great Empire is forgotten...

...until the Ice comes again.

03-10-2010, 12:31 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

One wonders why, exactly, the yeti's blue eyes are so terrifying.

It's a fragment of the Abominable Mental Powers of their "civilized cousins". It's not their eyes' blue colouration that shuts down a victim's ability to take conscious movement, but a subconscious psionic power, similar to *hold person* or psionic *paralysis*, which requires the Yeti to form a psychic link with its target via eye contact.

Fortunately, the Yeti's gaze only affects an unprepared and off-balanced mind, thus it only works on surprised victims.

03-10-2010, 12:49 AM

Lord_Gamera

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth**

Wait, yeti are supposed to live in a tropical mountain region? Where? Is it possible you're thinking about Bigfoot? I know a lot of fiction merge Bigfoot, Yeti, AND the Abominable Snowman into a singular race, but the text implies that the Bigfoot is the distant cousin they're talking about. Though that could just be the Carnivorous Ape I think we covered earlier. At this point, all I can think of when I think of Yeti are the Darkstalker character and that Sam and Max game. Though if the Yeti really are intelligent, and villages are slaughtering for their coats, that could be a disturbing adventure hook right there.

Subtropical mountain range, technically. Yeti are alleged to be Himalayan in origin and that mountain range lies on the South Western border of China and pretty solidly in the Northern subtropical belt.

I figure their intelligence is expressed as a tendency towards meditation and philosophical contemplation, hence the ascetic lifestyle.

03-10-2010, 04:11 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

It's a fragment of the Abominable Mental Powers of their "civilized cousins". It's not their eyes' blue colouration that shuts down a victim's ability to take conscious movement, but a subconscious psionic power, similar to *hold person* or psionic *paralysis*, which requires the Yeti to form a psychic link with its target via eye contact.

Perhaps the Yeti are not so much of average intelligence as they are unable to be measured on our linear intelligence scale. While they mostly act like animals, Yetis are in fact superhumanly, terrifyingly intelligent. They act as animals all the time because they are a band of solipsistic monks who care nothing for the world or each other and only perform the minimum tasks necessary to survive so that they can keep meditating upon mysteries the human brain can barely perceive. Each Yeti could easily solve the world's problems through creative and innovative solutions, but none can be motivated to care about human beings, or about any other sentients beyond themselves, for they believe this world is just an illusion trying to distract themselves from the great cosmic mysteries. And perhaps they are right.

That is what the adventurers see in the yeti's eyes: the startlingly vast mind behind the animal, and man's inconsequential role in the universe.

03-10-2010, 06:18 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Perhaps the Yeti are not so much of average intelligence as they are unable to be measured on our linear intelligence scale. While they mostly act like animals, Yetis are in fact superhumanly, terrifyingly intelligent. They act as animals all the time because they are a band of solipsistic monks who care nothing for the world or each other and only perform the minimum tasks necessary to survive so that they can keep meditating upon mysteries the human brain can barely perceive. Each Yeti could easily solve the world's problems through creative and innovative solutions, but none can be motivated to care about human beings, or about any other sentients beyond themselves, for they believe this world is just an illusion trying to distract themselves from the great cosmic mysteries. And perhaps they are right.

That is what the adventurers see in the yeti's eyes: the startlingly vast mind behind the animal, and man's inconsequential role in the universe.

That I like. Self-flagellation, attempting to emulate various animals, sitting in holes or living on small platforms precariously perched on posts for decades at a time, and other seemingly inexplicable behaviors similar those of hermits and ecstasies. The wild overgrown hair (not fur) matted with filth and creepy eyes are just the natural consequences of this lifestyle. Desert Father or bodhisattva, except no (apparent?) traces of compassion and humility. All the world is Maya.

03-10-2010, 06:30 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

The wild overgrown hair (not fur) matted with filth and creepy eyes are just the natural consequences of this lifestyle. Desert Father or bodhisattva, except no (apparent?) traces of compassion and humility. All the world is Maya.

Yeti don't naturally live in the frozen mountainous wastes. They choose to live there, to deny themselves the comforts of this world.

03-10-2010, 07:02 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Perhaps the Yeti are not so much of average intelligence as they are unable to be measured on our linear intelligence scale. While they mostly act like animals, Yetis are in fact superhumanly, terrifyingly intelligent. They act as animals all the time because they are a band of solipsistic monks who care nothing for the world or each other and only perform the minimum tasks necessary to survive so that they can keep meditating upon mysteries the human brain can barely perceive. Each Yeti could easily solve the world's problems through creative and innovative solutions, but none can be motivated to care about human beings, or about any other sentients beyond themselves, for they believe this world is just an illusion trying to distract themselves from the great cosmic mysteries. And perhaps they are right.

That is what the adventurers see in the yeti's eyes: the startlingly vast mind behind the animal, and man's inconsequential role in the universe.

That's a nice idea. The Yeti are the ascetic hermits to the Abominable Snowmen's Lamas.

I'd toyed with the idea that looking into the yeti's eyes caused a terrifying contact with a vast cold *something*, but couldn't flesh it out. Making them Void-Meditating Yogis would be a perfect justification. Not so sure about the "vast intelligence" bit though - I like to imagine the Abominable Snowmen as being the ones with the Great Intelligence, but the Yetis are beings to which intelligence is almost irrelevant - it's the momentary realization that *having a mind doesn't matter* that makes eye contact with them so terrifying.

03-22-2010, 03:02 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Is the manual finished? Or are we just taking a break?

Or have we covered Zombies and Yuan-ti already?

Just curious....

03-22-2010, 07:29 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Is the manual finished? Or are we just taking a break?

The thread's sleeping. We still have Yuan-ti & Yuan-ti Histachii, Yugoloth Guardians, Zaratan and Zombies to handle!

03-23-2010, 01:12 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Don't worry, I haven't gone away. Just been house moving and busy with work. Should be okay some time this week to continue.

03-23-2010, 02:42 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Don't worry, I haven't gone away. Just been house moving and busy with work. Should be okay some time this week to continue.

It would be a shame for the thread(s) to die this near the end.

03-24-2010, 04:13 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Pukako**

Is the manual finished? Or are we just taking a break?

Or have we covered Zombies and Yuan-ti already?

Just curious....

I wouldn't worry about it.

We've only got five monsters left from the Monstrous Manual, but there's still all the Monstrous Compendiums to do.

It's not like we're going to be running out of AD&D monsters in a hurry.:)

03-24-2010, 05:36 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I wouldn't worry about it.

We've only got five monsters left from the Monstrous Manual, but there's still all the Monstrous Compendiums to do.

It's not like we're going to be running out of AD&D monsters in a hurry.:)

Hell yeah. Looking my shelf alone I see Dark Sun Compendium 2, Ravenloft 1, 2, and 3, Mysteria Compendium, and Planescape 1, and 2.

Damnit, I never did find the binder where I had Dark Sun 1 stored(DS 1 was released for some weird reason as papers that you put in a binder).

03-27-2010, 02:50 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

Damnit, I never did find the binder where I had Dark Sun 1 stored(DS 1 was released for some weird reason as papers that you put in a binder).

That looseleaf format they used for the early 2E AD&D Monstrous Compendiums didn't receive much favour with me either. Having your Monster Manual in a folder had a few organisational advantages, since you can rearrange, remove & insert sheets as you liked, but the increased durability of a decent binding and hardcover far outweighed that, in my humble opinion.

The biggest advantage of the 2E monster layout was putting each monster on a whole number of pages (usually one). That was very user-friendly.

03-30-2010, 07:06 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

And we're back in business! Sorry for the long delay. Would you believe it, but I actually had to *do some work* while I was at work, for a change?

Yuan-ti

First monster back, and it's a good'un. I don't think it's going out on too much of a limb to say that we all love a good Yuan-ti, right? Even if, as psionic monsters, they were unusable for 12-year-old me, unaware of and unable to afford the psionics handbook for quite a few more years.

I love random tables, especially for mutations, and it's good to see that the Yuan-ti entry has one - you don't actually get that many in the MM as a whole. Admittedly the contents aren't hugely interesting, but nevermind; the text contains the immortal line: "This is a general guide; the DM can invent his own combinations of snake and human." Don't you just love being encouraged to be creative?

Yuan-ti society itself is not exactly fleshed out; we're just told that they are "geniuses" who "worship evil". This gives them somewhat of a modular scope; they're very much plug-and-play. Do you need a sinister, intelligent race of evil worshippers in your campaign? No problem; just crack open your nearest MM, unplug the Yuan-ti, and slot them right in.

I usually imagine Yuan-ti as vaguely South-East Asian, living in Angkor Wat style jungle temples. Unlike other evil races there's no mention of Yuan-ti plotting to overthrow "good" societies; I take this to mean that as long as they can get along with worshipping evil undisturbed they're not necessarily bad neighbours.

03-30-2010, 07:50 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yeah, yuan-ti customisability and scaling (pun intended) does make them a highly versatile enemy. The fact that they also need regular infusions of human stock for breeding and regularly infiltrate normal society also makes them a good deal more creepy than another goblinoid race.

03-30-2010, 07:52 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

the text contains the immortal line: "This is a general guide; the DM can invent his own combinations of snake and human." Don't you just love being encouraged to be creative?

Homo ouroboros: A breed of contortionists who travel by biting their own toes, and rolling. Often find work in carnivals, or unclogging drain pipes.

03-30-2010, 11:25 PM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I've always been a big fan of the yuan-ti with snake heads for hands--it's just the right combo of dangerous and goofy for that to be a hit in my imagination. So, of course, it's been gone as an option in both 3.5 and 4e.

03-31-2010, 12:19 AM

rex monday

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

I've always been a big fan of the yuan-ti with snake heads for hands--it's just the right combo of dangerous and goofy for that to be a hit in my imagination. So, of course, it's been gone as an option in both 3.5 and 4e.

How so? In what way are you prevented from just saying whatever melee attack a yuan-ti has is a snake bite from his snake hands? Maybe add poison or something.

03-31-2010, 12:52 AM

HaplessVictim

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The Yuan-ti were the first "module specific" monster I ever used outside of that module. They were introduced, if I remember correctly, in "The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan" but did little more there than be the "jungle savages" in the valley/crater that hide the eponymous shrine. I was intrigued by the "super-genius evil snakemen" concept, though, and made them mid-level baddies in a couple of adventures over the years. I had big plans for them in the last campaign I designed for 1st ed (but never ran). There was to be an enormous and wealthy Yuan-ti civilization south of the Europe-esque land where the player characters lived. I'd hoped to be able to stun and frighten the players by showing them a powerful and advanced civilization of pure evil right on their doorsteps, but never got the chance.

03-31-2010, 02:43 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yuan-ti make perfect elder serpent people for a Howard-esque sword-and-sorcery campaign.

Imagine starting a campaign with one PC as the newly enthroned king of Valusia, after killing the old king, and the rest as his comrades and councilors... :D

03-31-2010, 04:51 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **HaplessVictim**

The Yuan-ti were the first "module specific" monster I ever used outside of that module. They were introduced, if I remember correctly, in "The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan" but did little more there than be the "jungle savages" in the valley/crater that hide the eponymous shrine. I was intrigued by the "super-genius evil snakemen" concept, though, and made them mid-level baddies in a couple of adventures over the years. I had big plans for them in the last campaign I designed for 1st ed (but never ran). There was to be an enormous and wealthy Yuan-ti civilization south of the Europe-esque land where the player characters lived. I'd hoped to be able to stun and frighten the players by showing them a powerful and advanced civilization of pure evil right on their doorsteps, but never got the chance.

The outline is right but the name is wrong - the module the Yuan-ti premiered in was *Dwellers of the Forbidden City*.

If I remember rightly The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan did premier a popular monster - the Gibbering Mouter. It always seemed a bizarre fit to the module to me.

Anyhow, Yuan-ti are one of those monsters you could base an entire campaign around - the serpentine schemers plotting to overthrow the mammalian races and bring about the Rule of the Reptiles.

However, I am a bit unhappy about the backstory. I prefer them to be Howard-style pre-human serpent-people rather than a cult of humans who've been turned into snake-things by an "reptilian elder god". Like Howard's serpent men they were forced to use magic to hide in the appearance of humanoids after being almost slaughtered by the upstart mammals. To their great shame, they have been pretending to be human for so long that most of them have acquired permanent anthropoid traits.* Still, their leaders are true examples of their species and when the Glorious Day of Victory comes they can use their magic to mimic their rulers shape and return their whole species to its proper form.

*I imagine they use something like the Call of Cthulhu spell "Devour Shape" to permanently assume a humanoid disguise by devouring the victim whose shape they assume. Unfortunately the spell has long-term side effects.

Oh, and obviously the titles the Monstrous Manual quotes are completely backwards. The "purebloods" or "truly blessed" are those Yuan-ti without the taint of human gene-plasm, the "abominations" are those wretched creatures that closely resemble vile humanity, and the "half-breeds" are in-between.

03-31-2010, 04:54 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I never gave them much thought other than placing a city of theirs in the distant north- in a volcano to provide them heat.

03-31-2010, 05:00 AM

Hexmage

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Anyhow, Yuan-ti are one of those monsters you could base an entire campaign around - the serpentine schemers plotting to overthrow the mammalian races and bring about the Rule of the Reptiles.

I'm actually doing exactly this.

I also had the yuan-ti be the "creators" of the couatls. An angel came to civilize the yuan-ti and teach them about the gods, but they didn't quite understand the message and began to worship the angel itself as a god. Their worship transformed the greater angel and its less powerful angelic allies into the snake-like couatls.

As for why the yuan-ti became evil, the demon lord Sertrous seduced them with promises of power and led them in a war against an ancient magocracy.

03-31-2010, 05:10 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Was it 1e or 2e where they were given extensive psionics?

03-31-2010, 08:24 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I never really used Yuan-ti in my campaigns. For any edition when I think about it. I think they suffer from snake people syndrome. Yuan-ti, Salamanders, Naga, etc. I suppose you could make a plot about how the snake people all being one species but I often found the Yuan-ti being pushed out by the other snake people.

03-31-2010, 10:26 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **rex monday**

How so? In what way are you prevented from just saying whatever melee attack a yuan-ti has is a snake bite from his snake hands? Maybe add poison or something.

I'm not, obviously. But it's been taken out of the books and with it goes some whimsy.

03-31-2010, 05:00 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

I never really used Yuan-ti in my campaigns. For any edition when I think about it. I think they suffer from snake people syndrome. Yuan-ti, Salamanders, Naga, etc. I suppose you could make a plot about how the snake people all being one species but I often found the Yuan-ti being pushed out by the other snake people.

I agree - monster overlap is a huge problem with the MM. (Humanoid races being the obvious example: "Hmm, do I use orcs or hobgoblins? Interesting choice. Oh no, wait, it isn't, they're *almost exactly the same*.")

Snake people really are one of those creatures that you can't use more than one of in a campaign. If you're going to have Naga you can't really have Yuan-ti, and vice versa.

03-31-2010, 05:01 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Was it 1e or 2e where they were given extensive psionics?

I never played much 1e but they get a shitload of psionics in the 2e MM.

03-31-2010, 06:03 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Snake people really are one of those creatures that you can't use more than one of in a campaign. If you're going to have Naga you can't really have Yuan-ti, and vice versa.

I think you can, but you have to tie them closely together somehow, not just have two separate and different sorts of snake people in two different parts of the setting.

03-31-2010, 06:14 PM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

... which I think dovetails perfectly with standard Yuan-ti culture, myself, because if I had to name one thing that stands out about the Yuan-ti, that thing would be their unnatural skills at breeding mutant ophidian horrors and also their cultural tendency to form into distinct castes.

Wait.

If I had to name *two* things that stand out about the Yuan-ti, those things would be their unnatural skills at breeding mutant ophidian horrors, and their cultural tendency to form into distinct castes, and also their vast and just-slightly-alien intelligence.

Er, shit.

If I had to name *three* things that stand out about the Yuan-ti, those things would be their unnatural skills at breeding mutant ophidian horrors, their cultural tendency to form into distinct castes, and their vast and just-slightly-alien intelligence, and also their literally religious dedication to the utter ruin of the inferior mammal-races **I'LL COME IN AGAIN!**

03-31-2010, 06:41 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

If you're going to have Naga you can't really have Yuan-ti, and vice versa.

??

Mythological spirit beings are nothing like corrupted humans turned snakes. And neither are snake shaped elementals.

03-31-2010, 07:25 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

??

Mythological spirit beings are nothing like corrupted humans turned snakes. And neither are snake shaped elementals.

I just mean there's a bit of motif-mixture that will diminish the interest and power of both. If you have a Yuan-ti portion of a campaign following a Naga one, the reaction will generally not be "Ooh, Yuan-ti!"; rather it will be something like "Oh, more snake people."

04-01-2010, 05:58 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

??

Mythological spirit beings are nothing like corrupted humans turned snakes. And neither are snake shaped elementals.

Maybe from a physical or psychological standpoint. From the point of a group of people who kill things and take their stuff though....it's a snake person. Most players of D&D aren't going into the questions of "Why do these snake human hybrids worship evil" or "Oh, it's not really a snake person. It's actually an elemental that's chosen to manifest itself in a snake like form". To them it's "Snake person! KILL IT! TAKE IT'S STUFF!". And a lot of them aren't going to know about mythological spirit beings either. It's just more snake people. Plus a lot of D&D settings basically play naga up as....ambitious snake people, not spirit beings. Forgotten Realms being the worst about this but other settings as well.

Even if you do have players who like going into details about that stuff(and for our upcoming 4E campaign I have at least one player who does) they'll eventually get bored of another different snake person even if the mythological origins for all three are radically different.

The humanoid thing being a good point. I'll probably throw orcs or hobgoblins at the players but not both. For

more variety I'll just give either the orcs or hobgoblins the stats of the others but leave them as orcs/hobgoblins so the players have a bit more variety of foes without it feeling like a forced alliance of a bunch of different humanoids.

04-05-2010, 02:16 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Have you noticed that the portrayal of Yuan-ti in a lot of D&D sources doesn't seem to fit their stated alignment very well?

Yuan-ti are Chaotic Evil. They're usually portrayed as coldly calculating geniuses with a rigid caste system that run tightly organized conspiracies to rule mankind for their own nefarious aims. Evil yes, but where's the chaos?

I don't recall much (if any) mention of the streak of back-stabbing anarchy I'd expect in a society with that alignment. I half-suspect they were made CE out of some belief that was the "evillest" alignment.

Wouldn't Neutral Evil or Lawful Evil be a better fit?

04-05-2010, 03:56 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Yuan-ti are Chaotic Evil. They're usually portrayed as coldly calculating geniuses with a rigid caste system that run tightly organized conspiracies to rule mankind for their own nefarious aims. Evil yes, but where's the chaos?

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Wouldn't Neutral Evil or Lawful Evil be a better fit?

I suspect you're not alone in that train of thought - Yuan-Ti lost the "Chaotic" part in the transition from 3.5 to 4.

I confess I've never used them much either. Too much competition in the evil mastermind category.

04-06-2010, 02:59 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Have you noticed that the portrayal of Yuan-ti in a lot of D&D sources doesn't seem to fit their stated alignment very well?

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Wouldn't Neutral Evil or Lawful Evil be a better fit?

The more I read the 2nd ed MM, the more clear it is that the Lawful/Chaotic spectrum of monster alignments has nothing to do with how anarchistic or orderly you are. It's simply a grading on how exactly evil you are: Lawful or Neutral Evil is more evil than Chaotic Neutral, but less evil than Chaotic Evil. Chaotic Neutral is more evil-ish than Lawful Neutral, etc. And Chaotic Good is somehow less Good than Lawful Good.

Either that, or some Law/Chaos alignments were assigned completely at random without reading the monster's entry. But probably the first theory.

04-06-2010, 04:59 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

The more I read the 2nd ed MM, the more clear it is that the Lawful/Chaotic spectrum of monster alignments has nothing to do with how anarchistic or orderly you are. It's simply a grading on how exactly evil you are: Lawful or Neutral Evil is more evil than Chaotic Neutral, but less evil than Chaotic Evil. Chaotic Neutral is more evil-ish than Lawful Neutral, etc. And Chaotic Good is somehow less Good than Lawful Good.

This, sort of, echoes how it works in 4e, which has LG, G, N (well, Unaligned), E and CE. :)

Quote:

Either that, or some Law/Chaos alignments were assigned completely at random without reading the monster's entry. But probably the first theory.

Actually, I bet it's because, outside of Planescape, the Law-Chaos axis has always been secondary to the Good-Evil one, *and* no two GMs, players or game designers seem to agree what it means, exactly! :D

04-06-2010, 05:54 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

This, sort of, echoes how it works in 4e, which has LG, G, N (well, Unaligned), E and CE. :)

Not only that, but they seem to have accepted the "Lawful Good is more Good than just Good and Chaotic Evil is more Evil than just Evil" thing people always seem to unthinkingly fall back on.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Actually, I bet it's because, outside of Planescape, the Law-Chaos axis has always been secondary to the Good-Evil one,

Well, early on there was only the Law/Chaos axis, so it wasn't subordinate to Good/Evil then. But it was cribbed directly from Moorcock, where Chaos = Evil and Law = Good. So maybe Elric is to blame for this.

04-06-2010, 06:16 AM

Dormammu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Well, early on there was only the Law/Chaos axis, so it wasn't subordinate to Good/Evil then. But it was cribbed directly from Moorcock, where Chaos = Evil and Law = Good.

Until the final book when Elric realizes Law has been selling him a false bill of goods and he can only bring peace to the world by *balancing* Law and Chaos. So Neutral = good. ;)

04-06-2010, 06:25 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The writers have never understood their own good/evil/law/chaos stuff.

To use Forgotten Realms as an example. Alustriel founds a city called Silverymoon. It's noted for it's fair and just laws and how open and accepting it is. At the same time those laws are enforced (and some of them are quite harsh, including using magic to make someone have the sensation of being burned alive), often by Alustriel herself.

Her alignment? Chaotic Good.

04-06-2010, 08:19 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Alustriel's just cranky, because of that weird pregnancy-distributed-throughout-her-body-(so-she's-still-hawt) thing she has going on.

The current 4e alignment axis is, ominously*, the same as the old WFRPG alignments:

Lawful -- Good -- Neutral -- Evil -- Chaotic

At least the prior double axes made D&D distinct (if incomprehensible**).

* I think this makes 4e's Demon Princes a read-across for the Ruinous Powers from Warhammer.

** And that's even *before* those parentheses they used to use: "Chaotic Neutral (evil tendencies)"

04-06-2010, 07:13 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

The more I read the 2nd ed MM, the more clear it is that the Lawful/Chaotic spectrum of monster alignments has nothing to do with how anarchistic or orderly you are. It's simply a grading on how exactly evil you are: Lawful or Neutral Evil is more evil than Chaotic Neutral, but less evil than Chaotic Evil. Chaotic Neutral is more evil-ish than Lawful Neutral, etc. And Chaotic Good is somehow less Good than Lawful Good.

Either that, or some Law/Chaos alignments were assigned completely at random without reading the monster's entry. But probably the first theory.

The first theory doesn't always work - don't forget that orcs are Lawful Evil in 2nd edition. As are a lot of the evil dragons. Liches can be Lawful Evil too.

I think the variance in alignments is due to the fact that the MM is a collection made up of the work of dozens of writers, all of whom having a different interpretation of what alignment meant.

04-07-2010, 12:09 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

The more I read the 2nd ed MM, the more clear it is that the Lawful/Chaotic spectrum of monster alignments has nothing to do with how anarchistic or orderly you are. It's simply a grading on how exactly evil you are: Lawful or Neutral Evil is more evil than Chaotic Neutral, but less evil than Chaotic Evil. Chaotic Neutral is more evil-ish than Lawful Neutral, etc. And Chaotic Good is somehow less Good than Lawful Good.

Either that, or some Law/Chaos alignments were assigned completely at random without reading the monster's entry. But probably the first theory.

Dang it, I should have thought twice before letting the issue of alignment rear its ugly head.

Personally I think it's more about different authors having different interpretations of alignment than either of those two proposals.

Plus, I've long thought Neutral Evil is arguable more malevolent than CE or LE, since it seems the most "doing evil for Evil's sake" alignment.

Anyhow, getting back to Yuan-ti. Rather than have them a mounting threat plotting to destroy mankind maybe we should have them a pathetic, deteriorating race instead.

Every generation becoming weaker than the last, due to a combination of inbreeding and diluting their serpentine blood by mixing with humans. They waste their genius intelligence on fantasizing about their glory days, trying to "one-up" each other through horrendously elaborate plots and devising arts and pleasures of stunning decadence.

04-07-2010, 09:19 PM

Eliott

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The first theory doesn't always work - don't forget that orcs are Lawful Evil in 2nd edition. As are a lot of the evil dragons. Liches can be Lawful Evil too.

I think the variance in alignments is due to the fact that the MM is a collection made up of the work of dozens of writers, all of whom having a different interpretation of what alignment meant.

And they also needed to make societies have alignments as well, which is even harder. Orcs get jumped around alot between chaotic and lawful evil. This may be part of the original source material (In LOTR, Orcs seemed like they themselves were Chaotic Evil but forced to have a Lawful Evil society by their Neutral Evil god-king-eye Sauron)

04-07-2010, 09:45 PM

cpip

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Anyhow, getting back to Yuan-ti. Rather than have them a mounting threat plotting to destroy mankind maybe we should have them a pathetic, deteriorating race instead.

Every generation becoming weaker than the last, due to a combination of inbreeding and diluting their serpentine blood by mixing with humans. They waste their genius intelligence on fantasizing about their glory days, trying to "one-up" each other through horrendously elaborate plots and devising arts and pleasures of stunning decadence.

I like this, and I do believe I may use it in a game of my own at some point. They may well be outrageously advanced in some fashions of magic or technology (or both), but they're often not PRACTICAL applications; they're entertaining.

04-08-2010, 07:23 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yuan-ti (Histachii)

I should probably have lumped this entry together with the previous one, as it doesn't really add very much - it's really just a description of how a Histachii (a reptilian humanoid servitor of the Yuan-ti) is created. As you might expect, this involves lots of rigmarole that looks like it comes from an Indiana Jones film; none of it good for the victim, but all of it good for the DM and the other players.

Suffice it to say, if you're forced to drink the Histachii drink, you're fucked. First of all, there's a decent chance you'll die - and that's if your saving throw is *successful*. If it isn't, within 7-12 days you'll become a Histachii and there's not a lot you can do about it, not unless somebody manages to rescue you and *neutralize poison*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, and *heal* are cast on you, in that order. And even then you're losing a point of Intelligence.

That said, being a Histachii doesn't sound all that bad as these things go - their duties are "hunting, caring for the yuan-ti's reptile menageries, guarding prisoners, and various custodial chores" (which is pretty much the best a serf or castle servant in any D&D society could hope for), and they also get to take nice cool baths in their leisuretime. I can think of worse lives to lead.

04-08-2010, 08:05 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I guess that is better than having your kids born skum.

04-08-2010, 08:25 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Dormammu**

Until the final book when Elric realizes Law has been selling him a false bill of goods and he can only bring peace to the world by *balancing* Law and Chaos. So Neutral = good. ;)

Yah. I think the BECMI Law-Neutrality-Chaos axis worked fairly well.

Lawful types believe that everything should be ordered, that obeying rules is natural, that you should honor your promises, and frequently chooses the good of the many over the good of the few. Being lawful is usually "good", but not always.

Chaotic folks, on the other hand, believe in luck and chance, that the individual is more valuable than the group, that selfishness is natural and that telling the truth or keeping promises is optional. This frequently ends up as "evil", but not always.

Neutrals, in turn, believe in balance between chaos and order, are primarily interested in their personal survival and well-being (but usually not at the expense of others), try to be self-reliant but don't believe in "luck", and generally can be either "good" or "evil", depending on the situation.

04-09-2010, 05:20 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Suffice it to say, if you're forced to drink the Histachii drink, you're fucked. First of all, there's a decent chance you'll die - and that's if your saving throw is *successful*. If it isn't, within 7-12 days you'll become a Histachii and there's not a lot you can do about it. And even then you're losing a point of Intelligence.

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So once you've restored Tim the Cleric from his existence as a Wight by performing Epic Quests (TM), he then manages to get himself captured by the Yuan-ti, and turned into a Histachii without getting killed.

Now he's slightly dumber, but happy, and when you (his old adventuring buddies) arrive to rescue him, he's not going to come along quietly. He's going to remember the Hell you put him through when he was a wight, and scream blue murder

In fact, should one try to rescue or kill these guys?

As to alignment, if you can play an emo sorcerer that's not evil, or a paladin that has a sense of humour, then whatever system you're using should work.

04-10-2010, 02:39 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Yuan-ti (Histachii)

I should probably have lumped this entry together with the previous one, as it doesn't really add very much - it's really just a description of how a Histachii (a reptilian humanoid servitor of the Yuan-ti) is created. As you might expect, this involves lots of rigmarole that looks like it comes from an Indiana Jones film; none of it good for the victim, but all of it good for the DM and the other players.

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Wasn't there an earlier version of these monsters that used a venomous bite to induce the transformation - if a human they bit failed the save vs poison they'd turn into another snake-monster, but non-humans just died from the venom.

Upon reflection, I'm getting the Histachii mixed up with another snake-humanoid servitor of the Yuan-ti: The Ophidian. Those were less anthropomorphic than Histachii, having a snake's tail instead of legs and the head of a viper.

Since they're basically scaly werewolves, Ophidians are a far more effective means for the Yuan-ti to mass convert humanity into serpentkind than Histachii. They don't need to prepare potions and force-feed them to people - just send out Ophidians to bite as many people as they can.

I guess they prefer Histachii since they're far more obedient, being "completely submissive to their yuan-ti masters, carrying out their every order without hesitation".

The only other bit of their MM writeup that grabbed me attention is it describing these Low Intelligence (Int 5-7) creatures as "near-mindless abominations".

"Near mindless"? That's a bit harsh for a creature which is only one intelligence step below average!

04-10-2010, 03:39 AM

Belchion

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

"Near mindless"? That's a bit harsh for a creature which is only one intelligence step below average!

Well, perhaps they are intelligent but brainwashed? The wellbeing of their Yuan-Ti masters is all what is on their mind, but they are quite capable of doing a lot of stuff without direct supervision (unlike zombies and the like).

04-11-2010, 01:34 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

When I was a wee kid, it was the histachi that freaked me out the most--I think it's the inevitability of death or grotesque transformation without a way out that did it for me. The illustration is also pretty grotesque, and not in a good way. Baxa's histachi looks like a deformed chicken-man.

04-11-2010, 01:44 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Belchion**

Well, perhaps they are intelligent but brainwashed? The wellbeing of their Yuan-Ti masters is all what is on their mind, but they are quite capable of doing a lot of stuff without direct supervision (unlike zombies and the like).

Perhaps they literally become "almost mindless" when being commanded by Yuan-ti?

The Histachii transformation could alter their brain so that any Yuan-ti can use its psionic powers over snakes to shut down their higher brain functions and manipulate them like will-less puppets by directly accessing the "reptile brain" all mammals have plugged into their brainstem. That could explain why they're immune to *hold* and *charm* spells - the brain modifications are so extreme Histachii minds do not respond normally to magic.

If their aren't any Yuan-ti aren't around Histachii are fully independent, expressing their (slightly dim) intelligence according to their Chaotic Evil alignment. Some might even change their ways and become Chaotic Neutral anarchists or Chaotic Good freedom fighters.

Then a single Yuan-ti comes along and turns an entire Histachii community into its slaves with a thought...

Hmm, this idea's got potential.

04-11-2010, 02:01 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

If their aren't any Yuan-ti aren't around Histachii are fully independent, expressing their (slightly dim) intelligence according to their Chaotic Evil alignment. Some might even change their ways and become Chaotic Neutral anarchists or Chaotic Good freedom fighters.

They might be of slightly lower intelligence because of conflict or static between their higher order sentient/mammal brain and their more basic reptile brain.

This reminds me of how Aquaman could (when some writer tried to reboot him and make him cooler) access the primitive fish brain that your smarter mammal brain is built on. Aquaman could then shut the fish brain down and knock people unconscious or some such.

I don't think either concept has a good standing on scientific grounds, but this is D&D. It's more important that it sound cool, possibly be disguised in pseudo-medieval language and thought and/or generate some cool plotlines. Maybe the Histachii have their spirit or consciousness or animus or or ka or something replaced by that or a reptile, producing the same effect.

04-14-2010, 11:20 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Only three entries to go. I can't believe this series of threads is coming to an end after all this time... Sob, snuffle, etc. What would be a suitable way to end it? I was thinking a separate thread for "regulars" to post their Top 5 or Top 10 entries?

Anyway...

Yugoloth, Guardian

The paucity of this entry is pretty amazing, when you consider what an important role the Yugoloths play in the D&D multiverse; it wouldn't be until the Planescape Monstrous Compendiums started to be released that we'd get a fully fleshed out set of proper Neutral Evil demons to play with. It's also rather surprising to consider that Yugoloths (according to my comprehensive and scientific poll) are the favourite Lower Planar beings of rpg.net - I'm assuming this is based on their Planescape incarnation and not the MM's.

So what do we get for a bog standard Yugoloth in the 2nd edition Monstrous Manual? The simple answer is not a lot - Yugoloths are yet another variant on the "creature which wizards use to guard things" motif that we've seen so often over the past however-many-hundred pages, and this entry doesn't really even manage to do it with any aplomb. The idea of a big winged bear with ram's horns is okay enough, and as a general rule summoning is a concept for magic-use which really appeals... but the entry is so cursory an overview that it manages to communicate very little flavour.

I find it interesting that Planescape effectively resurrected the old 1st edition daemons with slight name-changes; it's also the setting that reintroduced Orcus. Perhaps by the time it was released, the whole D&D=satanic thing had run its course?

04-15-2010, 12:40 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The problem with "guardian yugoloths" is a fairly common one in D&D--using a common (or uncommon) English word to represent a specific creature; spectre, wraith, etc. The original 1e guardian daemon didn't have anything to do with the NE daemons of Gehenna. But the word daemon was verboten, of course, in 2e, and so it got the same name change to the made-up-but-sinister-sounding "yugoloth".

One of the late-era Planescape books, *Faces of Evil*, explained the guardian yugoloths by saying that they were effectively magical constructs made by real yugoloths specifically for wizards to summon, getting access to another mortal soul in the process without the distractions of being summoned themselves.

04-15-2010, 12:47 AM

Hexmage

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I'm surprised that yugoloths are so popular. Is their popularity due to Planescape?

04-15-2010, 02:10 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

The problem with "guardian yugoloths" is a fairly common one in D&D--using a common (or uncommon) English word to represent a specific creature; spectre, wraith, etc. The original 1e guardian daemon didn't have anything to do with the NE daemons of Gehenna. But the word daemon was verboten, of course, in 2e, and so it got the same name change to the made-up-but-sinister-sounding "yugoloth".

One of the late-era Planescape books, *Faces of Evil*, explained the guardian yugoloths by saying that they were effectively magical constructs made by real yugoloths specifically for wizards to summon, getting access to another mortal soul in the process without the distractions of being summoned themselves.

Well you can hardly blame them, can you. It must be one of the most boring duties they can be summoned to the Prime Material to perform. Bound by a crazy wizard (of course they're crazy, who else would summon a NE daemon to guard their cellar) then stuck in a vault for years watching over a shiny geegaw, with nothing but dust and spiders for company.

They're probably glad when some adventurers kick in the door, it'd finally give them something to do.

They don't have much in the way of interesting powers apart from that "immune to damage X" trick. I suppose the Greater Guardian's ability to use suggestion every round - even while it is fighting! - could have some amusing applications. Well, amusing for the DM anyway.

suggest "I'm just an illusion, ignore me."

suggest "The fiend's possessed the cleric, overpower her!"

et cetera, et cetera.

04-15-2010, 04:57 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I have this image of screwing with the players. First they enter a room and defeat it's yugoloth guardian. They open the chest....which turns out to be a mimic. Then they turn around and find the door is gone....they're inside yet another mimic, the big room sized one. :D

04-15-2010, 05:58 AM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hexmage**

I'm surprised that yugoloths are so popular. Is their popularity due to Planescape?

Purely and entirely.

And yeah, the Guardian Yugoloth is the result of a search-and-replace for "daemon", nothing more. :D

04-15-2010, 11:32 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

I have this image of screwing with the players. First they enter a room and defeat it's yugoloth guardian. They open the chest....which turns out to be a mimic. Then they turn around and find the door is gone....they're inside yet another mimic, the big room sized one. :D

And the walls are stunjellies? And there's a lurker above and a trapper on the ceiling and floor?

04-15-2010, 02:10 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

And the walls are stunjellies? And there's a lurker above and a trapper on the ceiling and floor?

Good idea!

Didn't City of Brass have a room full of stunjellies to screw with the players?

I still want to convert City of Brass to 4E.

04-15-2010, 10:00 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**

And the walls are stunjellies? And there's a lurker above and a trapper on the ceiling and floor?

Don't forget the closet full of cloaklers. And the stone golem and caryatid column statues. And the table and rug under the effects of the *animate object* spell.

04-15-2010, 11:14 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hey, the Histaachii just had their first appearance in 4th edition yesterday in Dragon magazine. As a background for PCs no less: you exhibit yellowed eyes that shows that your ancestors were once brainwashed slaves of the Yuan-Ti.

04-16-2010, 04:32 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Something that just came to mind: is the "immune to one additional form of attack" thing inspired by the guardian demon in one of Elric books, which was immune to all swords?

04-16-2010, 04:34 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Don't forget the closet full of cloaklers. And the stone golem and caryatid column statues. And the table and rug under the effects of the *animate object* spell.

And the gazebo out back.

04-16-2010, 08:42 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ithaeur**

Something that just came to mind: is the "immune to one additional form of attack" thing inspired by the guardian demon in one of Elric books, which was immune to all swords?

Not sure, but I like the idea of monsters having resistances to certain types of weapons as well as just to fire, ice, magic, etc. Seems more "mythic", somehow.

04-17-2010, 01:10 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Don't forget the closet full of cloakies. And the stone golem and caryatid column statues. And the table and rug under the effects of the *animate object* spell.

Oh, and the water in the basin next to the bed. That's a Water Weird.;)

However, the real problems arise when it is revealed that the air in the room is wall-to-wall Invisible Stalkers and Aerial Servants.

You don't want to know what the chamberpot is.:eek:

04-17-2010, 09:05 AM

rex monday

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

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Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Home to a miniaturized Otyugh?

04-17-2010, 09:10 AM

Inyssius

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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You don't want to know what the chamberpot is.:eek:

Oh, and of course the [mimic] wardrobe full of [raggamoffyns] clothing; with a [peltyn] coin purse lying on top, bulging with [lock lurkers] gold coins.

04-17-2010, 11:44 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **rex monday**

Home to a miniaturized Otyugh?

Oh no, that's hardly bad enough to be "you don't want to know" territory. Why Otyughs are practically routine dungeon furniture.

04-17-2010, 11:46 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Inyssi**

Oh, and of course the [mimic] wardrobe full of [raggamoffyns] clothing; with a [peltyn] coin purse lying on top, bulging with [lock lurkers] gold coins.

And don't forget the cover on the [Mimic] bed is a Sheet Phantom, and the cushions are Pillow Fungi.

04-18-2010, 12:30 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Somewhere I read a theory that all those weird "not really a bit of dungeon but actually a monster" monsters were brought to the world by the mind flayer, from wherever they came from. The things were living furniture or walls or other devices useful to the illithids. But some escaped and have survived in the wild, imitating their environment that they find themselves in.

I don't recall where I saw it. I also don't know if I like the explanation or not, as it tries to make something silly into something legitimate, rather than embracing the silliness.

04-19-2010, 05:06 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

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While I do like to embrace the silly now and again I must confess to finding that theory quite attractive. It fits so neatly with the Mind Flayers and their "squishy biotech".

Why it even explains the Executioners Hood. It's to help elderly Mind Flayers eat their food after their tentacles have got too weak to break open skulls.

04-19-2010, 01:51 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

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Why it even explains the Executioners Hood. It's to help elderly Mind Flayers eat their food after their tentacles have got too weak to break open skulls.

Mimics also have obvious uses. It might even explain why Gelatinous Cubes are cubical (for cleaning out the corners of hallways).

Some amount of the D&D monster being aggressive and carnivorous might just be to being in an alien environment, and possibly due to not getting a proper diet of whatever it is that they eat. So they turn to eating people. Might make especial sense if Lurkers Above and Piercers need to eat from sentient beings, like Illithids do.

04-21-2010, 12:12 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Mimics also have obvious uses. It might even explain why Gelatinous Cubes are cubical (for cleaning out the corners of hallways).

Some amount of the D&D monster being aggressive and carnivorous might just be to being in an alien environment, and possibly due to not getting a proper diet of whatever it is that they eat. So they turn to eating people. Might make especial sense if Lurkers Above and Piercers need to eat from sentient beings, like Illithids do.

Well the 10-foot-square corridor-shape of Gelatinous Cubes is already well established. One wonders what they do when they come upon a 3-foot by 7-foot door. Probably just squish through it - they are gelatinous, after all.

As for Mimics, I can just imagine the Mind Flayer advertising campaign:

"From this day forth you will only ever need to buy one item of furniture for your home, for the new Yehthsfsjef-brand Universal Furnishing is any piece of furniture you need in one malleable, user-responsive package, whether it's a couch, bed, chair or brain-tapping cage. Telepathically contact our sales-minds now to find out about our easy payment schemes!"

04-21-2010, 03:06 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Well the 10-foot-square corridor-shape of Gelatinous Cubes is already well established. One wonders what they do when they come upon a 3-foot by 7-foot door. Probably just squish through it - they are gelatinous, after all.

Perhaps the mind flayers only make ten by ten hallways? Perhaps the ten foot increment has some specific geometrical or ritual importance to them? Perhaps gelatinous cubes don't naturally occur that large, but grow that size in the wild? Perhaps the cubes can squeeze in a gelatinous manner, but reform to cube shape to make sure they clean the corners of the room?

04-21-2010, 03:30 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Perhaps the mind flayers only make ten by ten hallways? Perhaps the ten foot increment has some specific geometrical or ritual importance to them? Perhaps gelatinous cubes don't naturally occur that large, but grow that size in the wild? Perhaps the cubes can squeeze in a gelatinous manner, but reform to cube shape to make sure they clean the corners of the room?

I thought mind flayer architecture was all squishy and curved, like their tentacles. With that in mind, wouldn't they have made gelatinous... *cylinders*... to wipe down all their squirming passageways? Perhaps the mind flayer connection just the result of an ill-informed supposition. An urban legend.

After all, isn't there already a creature that is obsessed with geometrical perfection and tidiness? A whole *plane* of them, in fact?

It just couldn't be, could it? Why on Mechanus would the modrons create a quasi-living engine to *clean up* the Prime Material Plane? Well, it makes no sense to us... but isn't the angular vacuum-blob the kind of thing that a society of obsessive-compulsives might send as an advance force to prep for an invasion? To make sure everything is all spic and span, so the legions don't get any unregulated stains on their dress whites? Does that mean that once everything's all June Cleaver, the modron march will end at our front door?

<Through the vestibule, three precise knocks are heard>

04-21-2010, 05:32 AM

Lord Zack

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

The question is why would the Modrons invade? What do they want from the Material Plane? Resources? Some kind of specific thing like an artifact or magic? Maybe they want to make the universe more orderly. That could easily backfire, after all war is pretty chaotic.

04-21-2010, 05:14 PM

Pukako

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Don't forget the "Do Not Enter" sign on the door...

04-21-2010, 05:24 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Lord Zack**

The question is why would the Modrons invade? What do they want from the Material Plane? Resources? Some kind of specific thing like an artifact or magic? Maybe they want to make the universe more orderly. That could easily backfire, after all war is pretty chaotic.

Perhaps... they want to shop? They watched one too many reality shows on their crystal balls (the often-forgotten d1 caste, who come in a variety of translucent and sparkly colors tuned to different "channels"). One in particular where designers strutted their draped and cut fabrics, adroitly enhanced with accessories from the Blue Man (Mercane) wall, and paired with smoky, sultry, or just smashing make overs.

The modrons want to look *fierce*.

04-23-2010, 07:37 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Zaratan

The penultimate monster in the MM is a really fun one, and in a way it would have been a good note on which to finish; where do you go, conceptually, after "gargantuan slumbering turtle-island demigod"? (The answer is zombie, but that's a bit of a climbdown, don't you feel?)

Zaratani are an Al-Qadim monster, and as is often the case with creatures from that setting, it oozes exactly the right kind of flavour - three parts Arabian Nights, two parts Borges, one part Lord of the Rings. Although as a general rule setting-specific stuff in the MM rather annoys me (as regular readers will be aware), this entry at least has the good grace to state explicitly that the creature is "from the Al-Qadim setting" rather than, for instance, just droning on about names and places you're never heard of if you haven't bought the *Forgotten Realms* boxed set because you're only 12 years old and haven't saved up enough pocket money.

In physical terms zaratani are a fun adventure in and of themselves - how can you beat a living island? Not to mention a living island that can swallow you, Jonah-like, and might have unknown treasures in its belly? (Adventure seed of all adventure seeds there: "Please, brave adventurers - return the sword of peracles from the zaratan's belly and bring it back to Saxinfraxin land, before it's too late!") But given their intelligence and ability to communicate, they also have the capacity to be moving adventure-dispensers of their very own, fonts of wisdom or disinformation, or even movers and shakers on a global level.

Not only that, you also get a hint at creation myth in the notion that the zaratani were the first inhabitants of the Land of Fate, which is itself great fun.

In short, we like the zaratan.

04-23-2010, 08:41 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Yeah, the zaratan is a simple but sweet, and tremendously atmospheric. Hints of Great A'tuin there, as well. :)

04-23-2010, 11:10 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

It seems to me that it would be really easy to use the Zaratan in other settings, unlike most setting specific monsters. It's a giant wandering island, so maybe it just wanders a bit further away from the Arabia analog in your setting and into your campaign usual regions. Why did it do that? I dunno. Sounds like a mystery for the PCs to investigate.

04-24-2010, 12:21 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

One of my players many years ago told me he wanted to play a zaratan. A zaratan wizard, specifically, whose familiar was the hive-mind of monks who lived on a monastery on his back.

Yeah, I vetoed that one. But it's still a neat idea.

04-24-2010, 01:12 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Lord Zack**

The question is why would the Modrons invade? What do they want from the Material Plane? Resources? Some kind of specific thing like an artifact or magic? Maybe they want to make the universe more orderly. That could easily backfire, after all war is pretty chaotic.

Of course they want to make things more orderly. Seeking orderliness is practically the *raison d'être* of Modron kind.

It's not "unregulated stains on their dress whites" they're concerned about (since Modrons don't wear dress whites), is that they're such obsessive-compulsives that the last time they sent an army to "Bring Order To The Prime Material" they got an average of 3.47 feet before they had to stop the advance and start to tidy the place up.

So, they invented the Gelatinous Cube to tidy the place up in advance, unfortunately this proved a failure since they misjudged the Prime Material plane's ability to regenerate dirt and rubbish.

Either that, or we're looking at it the wrong way - Gelatinous Cubes are not 10' squares because dungeon corridors are that shape, but dungeon corridors are 10' square because Gelatinous Cubes are 10' cubes. Every few decades a Gelatinous Cube mutates into a "Volcanic Cube" and bores out a few new sections of 10' corridor before expiring.

You see, the Cubes created the dungeon. All the other creatures are just tenants whose detritus is the "rent" they pay to sustain their mindless landlords.

04-24-2010, 01:29 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

In physical terms zaratani are a fun adventure in and of themselves - how can you beat a living island? Not to mention a living island that can swallow you, Jonah-like, and might have unknown treasures in its belly? (Adventure seed of all adventure seeds there: "Please, brave adventurers - return the sword of peracles from the zaratan's belly and bring it back to Saxinfraxin land, before it's too late!")

Simple enough. Zaratan have no special resistance to magic, so there is a fair choice of spells that will dispose of one, just keep casting spells from a safe distance until it fails a save (which it will have to do eventually). I'd suggest *polymorph other* to turn it into a goldfish or mouse. The multi-ton detritus in its stomach would then explode it, and you just have to sort through the remains for treasure.

Ah *polymorph other*, the spell with a thousand uses.:o

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

But given their intelligence and ability to communicate, they also have the capacity to be moving adventure-dispensers of their very own, fonts of wisdom or disinformation, or even movers and shakers on a global level.

Yes, but what kind of missions would a Zaratan be interested in sending PCs on? They think on a much slower and larger scale than humanoids there are probably serious communication difficulties. It might take decades for a Zaratan to telepathically instruct its Shaman-Priest in whatever task it wishes them to undertake (find its

stolen eggs, get rid of the pollution that's harming the fish catch, dredge a sea-channel so that the Zaratan can swim through it, *et cetera*).

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
In short, we like the zaratan.

So do I! You've left out two of the reasons I like them though...

Zaratans "have even been used as a mobile base for pirates and corsairs" - the Sea Caballeros have many fearsome tales of the Giant Turtle Buccaneers!

When not sleeping "The zaratan spends the rest of its time either mating or conversing with others of its own kind... The courtship ritual may take decades, and the mating itself lasts as long as a year." - sounds like they have a pleasant existence.:cool:

04-24-2010, 01:32 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **demiurge1138**
One of my players many years ago told me he wanted to play a zaratan. A zaratan wizard, specifically, whose familiar was the hive-mind of monks who lived on a monastery on his back.

Yeah, I vetoed that one. But it's still a neat idea.

A wizard? Its spell books must be something to see!

I'd have thought a Zaratan priest or psion would be more practical.

04-24-2010, 01:55 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**
A wizard? Its spell books must be something to see!

The monastery on its back has a collection of scrolls and tablets covering an assortment of eldritch fields, sufficient to rival the collection of any purely terrestrial library. Once a day, while the great turtle sleeps, novices rappel down its ear canal to the stand of great tin horns that press against the mighty beast's ear drum. Then, in chorus, they proceed to recite spell formulae in well-trained, deeply resonant voices.

Unlike human wizards, the zaratan has figured out a way to memorize spells while it sleeps.

04-24-2010, 05:33 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Our campaigns never really went to the sea so the zaratan was one of those monsters that just never got used.

04-24-2010, 07:05 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

Our campaigns never really went to the sea so the zaratan was one of those monsters that just never got used.

This is one of the great problems with the MM. So many sea monsters, so little use. Then again I'm sure most DMs have considered running sea-centric campaigns at some time or another.

04-24-2010, 09:21 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

Then again I'm sure most DMs have considered running sea-centric campaigns at some time or another.

...purely so that they could use all those fish monsters.

04-24-2010, 09:46 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

...purely so that they could use all those fish monsters.

AD&D has that weird spell, *airy water*. What if it just wasn't some odd wizard coming up with an unconventional solution to the interaction problem that segregates the air-breathing and water-breathing communities? What if it's a natural condition? There are lightning storms, and there are bolts from the blue. There are volcanoes that spit out rivers of incandescent rock, and there are sapient sparks of magma that wander off on their own in search of things to *burn*. There are fish so big, they can spin around and around like a dizzy top, and create a whirlpool. D&D's weather and other natural phenomena already has a Fortean twist.

What if sometimes the rain just pours down so hard that the composition of the sky naturally becomes half water and half air? Sputtering halflings peek out from their burrows and stare up at the bubbles, half-drowning. And the fish and their non-piscine but still fully aquatic friends look up at the water's surface, and notice it's no longer so impermeable. They stick their heads out, breathe in. And like catfish with legs who occasionally wander from one mud flat to the next, some species just shrug off the water, and ascend into the watery air.

While the *airy/watery* storm lasts, the fish migrate. They cross land barriers, spreading like invasive species. They race through the air in vast schools, glittering scales covering the already-occluded sky the same way flocks of passenger pigeon or clouds of locusts blackened the day at the start of the last century. While the partial phase-change endures in the firmament, they race frantically across the underbellies of the swollen clouds, seeking the next pond, the next river, the next lake, the next ocean.

Some fail, and as the meteorological phenomenon passes they fall to the ground, where they flop helplessly and die in the suddenly more arid air. Which explains all those stories about raining sea cats and dog fish. But some make it.

Giant phosphorescent jellyfish with strands that trail for miles, cuttle-kraken that swoop and dive and leave ink-mark graffiti, sharks that shoot laser beams from their eyes, and hundreds of lesser species follow the ephemeral road. And some can't resist the urge to swoop down into the (not seaweed) jungles, and snatch an elf or two.

It's D&D. If the party won't go to the ocean, bring the ocean to the party.

04-24-2010, 10:00 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Either that, or we're looking at it the wrong way - Gelatinous Cubes are not 10' squares because dungeon corridors are that shape, but dungeon corridors are 10' square because Gelatinous Cubes are 10' cubes. Every few decades a Gelatinous Cube mutates into a "Volcanic Cube" and bores out a few new sections of 10' corridor before expiring.

You see, the Cubes created the dungeon. All the other creatures are just tenants whose detritus is the "rent" they pay to sustain their mindless landlords.

This, by the way, is a great idea. Gelatinous cubes fit perfectly into the weirdly regular dungeon corridors because the cubes made the corridors as part of their lair.

It explains why there are so many dungeons out there, too: at one point the Cubes were more common creatures, but have recently been hunted to extinction by adventurers and goblins seeking a lair of their own.

04-25-2010, 01:14 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

This, by the way, is a great idea. Gelatinous cubes fit perfectly into the weirdly regular dungeon corridors because the cubes made the corridors as part of their lair.

It explains why there are so many dungeons out there, too: at one point the Cubes were more common creatures, but have recently been hunted to extinction by adventurers and goblins seeking a lair of their own.

No, the goblins aren't killing them, they round them up using torches on 10-foot poles and drive them to the underground to be sold to certain members of the Deep Races, who are using the cubes to excavate vast new dungeon complexes far deeper than any surface race has ventured.

The demand for "tunneling cubes" has grown so great the wild population is sorely depleted. It's a pity they're so hard to breed in captivity.

04-25-2010, 01:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

AD&D has that weird spell, *airy water*. What if it just wasn't some odd wizard coming up with an unconventional solution to the interaction problem that segregates the air-breathing and water-breathing communities? What if it's a natural condition? There are lightning storms, and there are bolts from the blue. There are volcanoes that spit out rivers of incandescent rock, and there are sapient sparks of magma that wander off on their own in search of things to *burn*. There are fish so big, they can spin around and around like a dizzy top, and create a whirlpool. D&D's weather and other natural phenomena already has a Fortean twist.

SNIP

I like this idea, it explains all the Flying Sharks, Walking Whales and other peculiar beasts of land and sea that seem rather "fishy" - they're previously airy-water migrating species that liked the journey over the land so much they decided to stay.

If a bulette, or "landshark", can produce sweat that turns solid earth to watery mud, why can't an "airshark" exude a substance that turns air watery, so it can keep swimming and breathing in comfort.

04-25-2010, 02:10 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

If a bulette, or "landshark", can produce sweat that turns solid earth to watery mud, why can't an "airshark" exude a substance that turns air watery, so it can keep swimming and breathing in comfort.

Airsharks are in one of the Arduin Grimoire books, aren't they? Or some other old-school D&D supplement that carefully avoids identifying itself as such?

04-25-2010, 12:04 PM

UnknownCorrespondent

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

While the *airy/watery* storm lasts, the fish migrate. They cross land barriers, spreading like invasive species. They race through the air in vast schools, glittering scales covering the already-occluded sky the same way flocks of passenger pigeon or clouds of locusts blackened the day at the start of the last century. While the partial phase-change endures in the firmament, they race frantically across the underbellies of the swollen clouds, seeking the next pond, the next river, the next lake, the next ocean.

<http://ursulav.deviantart.com/art/Pu...ation-60553213> :)

04-26-2010, 05:57 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

If it's a weird beast D&D has it. Comeon, this is the game that has acid breathing sharks. :)

04-27-2010, 04:59 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Airsharks are in one of the Arduin Grimoire books, aren't they? Or some other old-school D&D supplement that carefully avoids identifying itself as such?

The only official D&D flying shark I can think of offhand is the **Terlen**. That's from the 3E Fiend Folio though, and I don't think it appeared earlier.

That said, I'm sure there are other D&D flying shark monsters floating about earlier editions, officially or otherwise.

04-27-2010, 05:36 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **UnknownCorrespondent**

<http://ursulav.deviantart.com/art/Pu...ation-60553213> :)

If she had a sword and a chainmail bikini, and one of those puffers was in the process of biting her head off, that would be perfect. :)

04-28-2010, 12:20 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

If she had a sword and a chainmail bikini, and one of those puffers was in the process of biting her head off, that would be perfect. :)

Nah, that redhead is obviously a magic-user. She should be blasting those fish out of the air with *fireball* and *magic missile*.

Furthermore, as a card carrying Sea Caballero I can assure you those are not Vorpal Flying Puffer Fish. The bone-pale skin and long spines quite clearly shows they're Necromantic Flying Puffer Fish. That species shoots poison-spines which turn their victims into zombies.:cool:

04-29-2010, 04:42 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

The only official D&D flying shark I can think of offhand is the **Terlen**. That's from the 3E Fiend Folio though, and I don't think it appeared earlier.

That said, I'm sure there are other D&D flying shark monsters floating about earlier editions, officially or otherwise.

One issue of Polyhedron has several flying fish monsters, inc sharks.

And the terlen is a bad conversion of a Gamma World monster (the terl is a flying baracuda that reflects lasers from its feathers).

05-01-2010, 04:22 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

One issue of Polyhedron has several flying fish monsters, inc sharks.

That doesn't surprise me at all.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

And the terlen is a bad conversion of a Gamma World monster (the terl is a flying baracuda that reflects lasers from its feathers).

Obviously a defence it evolved for protection against the Flying Sharks With Lasers on Their Heads.:p

...or those bears have invaded from Synnibar.

05-01-2010, 02:44 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

...or those bears have invaded from Synnibar.

Synnibarr. The bears come with extra "grr"!

05-04-2010, 04:47 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

Obviously a defence it evolved for protection against the Flying Sharks With Lasers on Their Heads.:p

Lasers are an environmental stress in GW. An nothing says weird like a blue feathered fish (with out wings) that flies down and bites a chunk off a character.

05-05-2010, 02:49 AM

Ginkomortus

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Actually, wait, gelatinous cubes clearing dungeon hallways from the rock isn't a horrible idea, but they're not the masters of that.

They're oozes, right?

And, let's just hearken back to the posts of yore, where every third monster was once a proud race that ruled in the depths of time, now fallen and degenerate. What was the first being that ruled, though?

The yellow mold.

That vast, ochre intelligence, spread across the planet in a thin film of scum. ITs sentience depended on the connection of all ITs parts, but in those early, angry days, the earth had no settled, and belched forth deadly fumes and worse into the stormy skies. Fearful of losing ITself, or of being broken down into mere idiot puddles, IT proposed to dig itself a labyrinth of caverns in the dark of the bedrock. IT even, through ITs superior intellect, devised a plan for these tunnels, a circuitry for the dungeons beneath the earth...

And so IT created, using lesser oozes and slimes that parts of ITself had herded like sheep for generations, a new ooze. An ooze designed to geometric and genetic precision. Programmed to carve out the circuitry of the vast yellow mold mind from the rock, and to devour and excrete the metals within the earth, lining the perfectly square hallways of these dungeons with a micro-thin layer of doped semiconductors, the better to speed ITs thoughts.

05-06-2010, 07:15 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Braaaaaaiiiiiiiiiinssss

hint hint

05-07-2010, 12:35 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **(un)reason**

Braaaaaaiiiiiiiiiinssss

hint hint

But....but....we'll never see the thread again after that! We must hide our infamous friends so we can continue talking about....something.

05-07-2010, 01:25 PM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

But....but....we'll never see the thread again after that! We must hide our infamous friends so we can continue talking about....something.

Well, there's some random encounter tales and summon monster lists after the zombies, right?

Not the same, though, I guess.

05-07-2010, 01:27 PM

Thordic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

We can move on to the compendiums if we need to :)

Not quite the same but theres some winners in there.

05-07-2010, 02:08 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thordic**

We can move on to the compendiums if we need to :)

Not quite the same but theres some winners in there.

True. I have Compendiums 1&2, Ravenloft Compendiums 1-3, Planescape 1&2, Mysteria, and Dark Sun 2 myself.

Has officially given up on finding my Dark Sun 1 Someone must've trashed it without me knowing. I've dug through the entire garage.

05-07-2010, 06:34 PM

SlyBen

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Planescape! In addition to all 3 monstrous comepondiums, don't forget the monstrous supplements from the main campaign boxed set, and the planes of chaos, planes of law, and planes of conflict boxed sets. (Yes, I love me some Planescape.)

I may have sort of already been going over them on my own blog, inspired directly by this thread and a similar project or two. I wouldn't mind crossposting that stuff to its own rpg.net thread if there was interest. But I'd also be interested in following along if somebody else wanted to go there.

05-08-2010, 01:47 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thordic**

We can move on to the compendiums if we need to :)

Not quite the same but theres some winners in there.

Need to? I thought we were already going to!

05-08-2010, 01:52 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**
Synnibarr. The bears come with extra "grr"!

In that case shouldn't they be **bearrs**?;)

05-08-2010, 06:18 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

How about a vote then about the first Compendium we go through?

With Dark Sun about to roll in for 4E I'd kind of like us to do Dark Sun 1 if someone has it, if not Dark Sun 2. So that's my personal vote.

05-08-2010, 06:44 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Sounds good to me. MC I & II are pretty much all duplicated in the MM anyway, so we can probably skip those. Even with that, there's more than 12 options, so let's start with the first one from each campaign world. That actually works out at exactly 12, so I'll set that up in a sec.

Edit: It is done

05-08-2010, 07:04 PM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I'm not sure. Looking at my Compendium Annual 1&2 there's a lot of monsters that aren't in the MM. Heck, I don't see any that are. The main overlap I see are a few of the monsters are also in compendiums that are campaign specific and even there it's not that high.

05-08-2010, 07:15 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Hmm, I'd better actually look at them.

It does seem like they did condense the mundane animal entries a lot in the MM compared to MC1 & 2. But I can't see any that are actually missing. Can you spot any?

Edit: oh, you're talking about the annuals, not the compendia. D'oh. Yeah, I should probably have dropped one of the planar options and put the first annual in it's place. Oh well.

05-09-2010, 02:57 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Unfortunately I don't have many of the 2nd Edition monster sources, but I'm happy to tag along for those I don't have.

I'd rather be methodical and do them in chronological order. We can probably skip over the first two volumes of the Monstrous Compendium, since almost all the monsters are included in Monstrous Manual (although in seriously truncated versions for many of the animals).

From glancing through monster lists on wikipedia the only monster in the first two MC volumes I saw that's not in the MM was the Animal, Minimals.

That would put Volume Three up first - The Forgotten Realms Appendix (1989).

05-10-2010, 03:20 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

My vote is for the Annuals. They were meant to be a continuation for the MM and are as generic.

05-11-2010, 01:14 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well it looks like we might have made it... Yes it looks we made it to the end...

I'll miss doing this. But I have threatened to move on to the Planescape MCs in the past, so you never know... (I don't have any of the annuals.)

Anyway, without further ado...

Zombie

As unreason so eloquently put it, **Brains!**

You all know what a zombie is, but let's give the MM definition, as a kind of send-off (I've always loved the MM definitions for monsters everybody knows about already):

Quote:

Zombies are mindless, animated corpses controlled by their creators, usually evil wizards or priests. The condition of the corpse is not changed by the animating spell. If the body was missing a limb, the zombie created from it would be missing the same limb. Since it is difficult to get fresh bodies, most zombies are in sorry shape, usually missing hair and flesh, and sometimes even bones. This affects their movement, making it jerky and uneven. Usually zombies wear the clothing they died (or were buried) in. The rotting stench from a zombie might be noticeable up to 100 feet away, depending upon the condition of the body. Zombies cannot talk, being mindless, but have been known to utter a low moan when unable to complete an assigned task.

The interesting thing here, in my opinion, is that zombies are "controlled by their creators", which is a trope that seems to have fallen by the way side in popular zombie horror. When was the last time zombies in a film were controlled by anyone or anything beyond a desire to eat and pass on the disease? (Unless you include the 70s version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, where the pod people kind of sort of have a motivation beyond this.) The mindless aggression of the zombies in films like *Night of the Living Dead* and *28 Whatever Later* is compelling, but in itself has by now become a bit trite, so the D&D zombie has something of a refreshing old school feel about it.

The only thing really to say about standard zombies that I can think of is that they can be made from any humanoid creature. This is important, as it allows the creation of dwarf, elf, ogre, orc, or even giant zombies (if we stretch the meaning of the word "humanoid" a little). I have experimented with zombie dwarves on many occasions, though I have never seen a zombie elf. This will change next time I run D&D, probably.

We also have a veritable bonanza of zombie alternatives on offer:

Ju-Ju Zombie - These are somewhat more intelligent and "with it" zombies who are created by *energy drain* spells and (guess what?) have a hatred for living things. (Is there an undead D&D monster which doesn't have a hatred for living things? Not that I'm complaining.) The Ju-ju is a sort of Waffen SS zombie, being tougher and meaner than its regular colleague, and they even have a thief skill (climb walls). Exception based design, the Ju-ju zombie rejects thee!

Zombie Lord - These are uber-zombies which are created when a resurrection spell goes awry, though this is disappointingly rare. (Only evil people killed by undead who fail their resurrection survival roll and are blessed by an evil deity can achieve Zombie Lord status.) The MM doesn't make clear what happens if this happens to a PC, though I suspect the answer would, boringly, be "he becomes an NPC in control of the DM".

Sea Zombie - These are the animated corpses of drowned sailors, brought to life by somebody called "Nerull the Reaper", whoever he is. (He doesn't sound very nice, that's for sure.) As usual, they hate the living. Mysteriously, lots of them are priests (because we all know lots of priests drown at sea, right?). They attack ships and cause disease to those who are wounded by infecting the water with bacteria, which I think is a nice touch.

And that's that. No more zombies, and no more MM. Feels like a somewhat anti-climactic point on which to finish - though this is entirely suitable, as these threads began with an entirely anti-climactic beginning (the Aaracokra).

So, final point of discussion: What are your top 5 (or top 10, if you're feeling adventurous) MM monsters? I'll put my list up after much handwringing.

05-11-2010, 01:15 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I should also add:

Thanks!

to all the regular commenters. You know who you are. You really made writing these threads worthwhile, and your contributions have been both mad and brilliant 99% of the time.

I will at some point distill these threads into pdf form, god willing. If you would like a copy, please send me a PM with your email addy and I'll put you on the waiting list.

05-11-2010, 01:40 AM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

... brought to life by somebody called "Nerull the Reaper", whoever he is. (He doesn't sound very nice, that's for sure.) As usual, they hate the living. Mysteriously, lots of them are priests (because we all know lots of priests drown at sea, right?).

Greyhawk deity of death: Nerull Basically, the Grim Reaper, Gygaxed.

Not nearly as interesting as Wee Jas. Greyhawk also has Incabulos as another take on the death-as-hooded-skeleton theme.

And, these threads have been quite fun and entertaining. Good work, **noisms**!

05-11-2010, 03:12 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

The only thing really to say about standard zombies that I can think of is that they can be made from any humanoid creature. This is important, as it allows the creation of dwarf, elf, ogre, orc, or even giant zombies (if we stretch the meaning of the word "humanoid" a little). I have experimented with zombie dwarves on many occasions, though I have never seen a zombie elf. This will change next time I run D&D, probably.

3rd ed was all about the weird zombies, in my experience. I know I read at least one adventure featuring zombie whales, for example. And lots with zombie ogres.

05-11-2010, 05:22 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

All we want to do is eat your brains. We're not unreasonable, nobody is going to eat your eyes! I honestly don't think I've ever been in a D&D 2E campaign where there haven't been zombies. They were like Kobolds in 4E. You did a low level adventure and eventually a zombie would come and try and eat you.

05-11-2010, 05:45 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

3rd ed was all about the weird zombies, in my experience. I know I read at least one adventure featuring zombie whales, for example. And lots with zombie ogres.

Zombie whales.

A really big trebuchet, (un?)manned by zombie ogres.

A whale-sized parachute. Or even a paraglider, for the commandowhales.

Rancid blubbery brain-eating death from above.

05-11-2010, 06:12 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Okay, here's a question: Why are zombies hungry?

When the body dies, the digestive track stops working. It can no longer absorb all those nutrients.

All zombies do is masticate. Gnaw. Munch. Gobble. They don't *ingest*. And if they gorge themselves, there's nowhere for all the food to go. Eventually, their stomach will burst. All that yummy food just runs out the hole in their belly.

And curiously, they don't seem to crave the brains they've already eaten. Otherwise, they'd just sit there constantly swallowing the same bits of brain, again and again. Easier than chasing down a random group of skittish teenagers, after all.

Maybe that's the point. Mommy birds spitting half-digested food down their chicks' throats, Gerber's turnip and squash mush, cows horking up wads of grass to go ferment a little in the next stomach along the gastrointestinal assembly line. The end result is predigested mash.

The hunger for brains is telling. Something out there, in the shadows, definitely like brains. And not just any brains. Zombies don't slaver over gerbil and gopher skulls, after all. They want smarter brains. Sapient brains.

But that same brain-loving thing is apparently missing teeth. It needs a tool, a device to extract gray matter from the rigid braincase, and break up the already fairly mushy material into pulpy, easily-consumed morsels.

That's what zombies are for. Whatever *it* is, the zombies are its mobile pre-processing units. Von Newman eating machines. Viral dentition.

05-11-2010, 06:14 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

All zombies do is masticate. Gnaw. Munch. Gobble. They don't *ingest*.

...like Cookie Monster.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Maybe that's the point. Mommy birds spitting half-digested food down their chicks' throats, Gerber's turnip and squash mush, cows horking up wads of grass to go ferment a little in the next stomach along the gastrointestinal assembly line. The end result is predigested mash.

The hunger for brains is telling. Something out there, in the shadows, definitely like brains. And not just any brains. Zombies don't slaver over gerbil and gopher skulls, after all. They want smarter brains. Sapient brains.

But that same brain-loving thing is apparently missing teeth. It needs a tool, a device to extract gray matter from the rigid braincase, and break up the already fairly mushy material into pulpy, easily-consumed morsels.

Elderly Mind Flayer, who lost his tentacles? Aging Intellect Devourers?

05-11-2010, 06:23 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Elderly Mind Flayer, who lost his tentacles? Aging Intellect Devourers?

Not sure. The illithid are already over-burdened with cool ideas, and I don't know a lot about intellect devourers (except for the silly ustilagor retcon).

Something extradimensional, perhaps. Assimilation, or even art?

05-11-2010, 12:02 PM

Kakita Kojiro

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

3rd ed was all about the weird zombies, in my experience. I know I read at least one adventure featuring zombie whales, for example. And lots with zombie ogres.

You kids nowadays, impressed by zombie whales. Pshaw. Why Delecti the Necromancer was doing zombie whales in the Upland Swamp over in RuneQuest back in the 70s! And *he* sewed on dinosaur legs so his zombie whale could stomp around the swamp!

hobbles off to yell at kids on lawn

05-11-2010, 10:43 PM

Strangething

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Did the Ju-ju Zombie ever get updated to 3e? Or is that name too politically incorrect for the 21st century?

05-11-2010, 10:47 PM

Ithaeur

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Strangething**

Did the Ju-ju Zombie ever get updated to 3e? Or is that name too politically incorrect for the 21st century?

I don't recall seeing them anywhere, so probably not.

Also, noisms: Thank *you* for starting these threads, and carrying on to the Zombie Apocalypse at the end of it! :)

05-11-2010, 10:53 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

So, final point of discussion: What are your top 5 (or top 10, if you're feeling adventurous) MM monsters? I'll put my list up after much handwringing.

Deepspawn, aboleth, crabmen*, the Spelljammer beholders** as a whole and quaggoth.

*I wouldn't have thought much of them until this thread.

**Ironical because I think beholders are stupid.

And don't forget the last page- how to create critters and its uber teddy bear.

05-12-2010, 12:02 AM

demiurge1138

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Officially, the juju zombie turned up in 3e with the Unapproachable East Forgotten Realms book. They were always doing that--relegating cool monsters to FR. Like bullywugs, leucrotta and deepspawn.

05-12-2010, 03:21 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, deepspawn are a FR critter. They were first in Dwarves' Deep.

05-12-2010, 06:01 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

My favorite monsters in MM2E were probably:

1. Deep Dragon-Makes a wonderful behind the scenes plotter who's also dangerous in direct combat.
2. Feyr-Feels very Mythos inspired which appeals to me.
3. Zombie-Classics. You can't go through level 1 without at least facing a few.
4. Flesh Golem. Because no mad scientist story is complete without it.
5. Vampiric Mist. I watched a lot of B-Rated movies as a kid. Including one about blood sucking mist.

05-14-2010, 09:38 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

My Top 5 Entries

In no particular order:

- Kenku. I like tricky and mysterious races, and I think the fact that the designers left Kenku motivations entirely unsaid works well. They're a blank sheet for DMs.
- Mind Flayer. Iconic D&D monsters with a twist of Cthulu. Make great villains and somehow never become cliché.
- Gnoll. My favourite bog-standard evil humanoid race. And probably my favourite piece of art in the book.
- Carrion Crawler. This one is simple, but it just oozes old school appeal.
- Crabmen. Another blank sheet race for the DM, and a fun morally ambiguous type.

05-14-2010, 10:10 PM

Eliott

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

So basically the zombie lord is a nerf lich for lower level parties?

I remember one basically doing that gig in one of the ravenloft adventures.

05-14-2010, 10:18 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Eliott**

So basically the zombie lord is a nerf lich for lower level parties?

I remember one basically doing that gig in one of the ravenloft adventures.

Basically yes.

I'm not sure why the designers felt the need for that sort of thing. The point of a Lich is surely to make the players go "Oooh!" when they come across one for the first time, not "Oh, it's like that zombie lord we killed, except a bit tougher".

05-15-2010, 03:56 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Eliott**

So basically the zombie lord is a nerf lich for lower level parties?

I remember one basically doing that gig in one of the ravenloft adventures.

I'm surprised noisms left out the "best" bit about the Zombie Lord. Get within 90 feet of a Zombie Lord and you must save vs poison against its "odor of death" or suffer a random (1d6) horrible fate, with equal chances for *weakness*, *cause disease*, losing a point of Con, *contagion*, incapacitating nausea for 1d4 rounds or instant death followed by zombification.

Yes, they reek so bad it can kill your PC and turn their corpse into a Zombie. Compared to them, ghouls must smell like roses.

They can also *animate dead* once per day. Doesn't sound so special, except they can use the power on living creatures too - save vs death or become a zombie.

05-15-2010, 03:58 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Strangething**

Did the Ju-ju Zombie ever get updated to 3e? Or is that name too politically incorrect for the 21st century?

Didn't these have some kind of gaze attack in 1st edition? Unless my memory deceives me, in the original Monster Manual II if a Ju-Ju Zombie surprises someone they can look into their eyes and do something nasty to them, like paralysis or energy drain. I can't recall for sure.

05-15-2010, 04:10 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

So you aren't going to review the super teddy bear on the page after the zombie? Its one of the best jokes in the book.

05-15-2010, 05:19 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I think the juju zombie did make it into 3E. I'll have to check which book though.

05-15-2010, 05:34 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

I think the juju zombie did make it into 3E. I'll have to check which book though.

Unapproachable East, according to demiurge1138 a few posts ago.

05-15-2010, 05:38 AM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

- Crabmen. Another blank sheet race for the DM, and a fun morally ambiguous type.

Look liek men, taste liek crabs.

05-15-2010, 05:52 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Unapproachable East, according to demiurge1138 a few posts ago.

That's 2E. 3E renamed it Oriental Adventures and there's no Juju Zombie in that.

05-15-2010, 06:35 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

That's 2E. 3E renamed it Oriental Adventures and there's no Juju Zombie in that.

In 3E, Unapproachable East (2003) is a Forgotten Realms book. With the juju zombie template (and a sample bugbear) on pages 66-67.

05-15-2010, 06:56 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

In 3E, Unapproachable East (2003) is a Forgotten Realms book. With the juju zombie template (and a sample bugbear) on pages 66-67.

Ah. I don't have that book. Ah well.

05-15-2010, 09:22 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

So you aren't going to review the super teddy bear on the page after the zombie? Its one of the best jokes in the book.

Eh? That isn't in my book...

05-15-2010, 09:22 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Anyway, I've now downloaded all five of these threads and will shortly commence pdf-izing them. The offer is still open if you'd like me to send you a copy. Just pm me.

05-15-2010, 10:20 PM

celebrityomnipath

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I wonder, how much brains could a Mindflayer Zombie eat?

05-15-2010, 11:09 PM

(un)reason

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

My top 5, in before the lock.

5: Invisible stalker, if just for the picture. :D

4: Mongrelmen. They're just so tragic. Unlike the other low level humanoids, they have really cool abilities and a real moral dilemma attached to killing them.

3: Beholders: So many awesome varieties of weird and wonderful creature. One of D&D's few truly original monsters.

2: Kenku. Tricksters extraordinaire, and still inscrutable to this day. One of my real underrated favourites to use in actual play.

1: Deepspawn: Making dungeons make more sense from an ecological point of view, and serving as great big bosses too. They deserve a lot more credit for keeping adventurers in work over the years.

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

My favorites, at least today:

Aboleth: A primal enemy from an unimaginably distant age. Just look at them: With their size and their eyes and their slime and their tentacles — there's just something about that shape that screams *wrong* to our primate eyes. Then combine with vile coercive powers and an alien civilization that may just be waiting patiently for the waters to once again rise and wash away the surface races.

Otyugh: Someone bioengineered a *sewer system*. It's one of those tiny bits of world building that causes my brain to bubble and churn. Who did it? What does it say about the world? What else is out there?

Kobold: Take a wimpy little humanoid that by any right can barely survive on its own, then toss in a bit of Fantasy Fucking Vietnam filtered through Tucker's lens. Oh, and they're scrabbling marginal survivors made good, not draconians. Dog-lizards.

Lich: What's more classic than an obscenely powerful wizard who traded a chance to get a prom date for immortality?

Derro: What's not to like? Bugfuck insane little people ruled by the Cult of Personality. Above those mad eyes are shocks of white hair, probably because they learned something Dwarves Were Not Meant to Know. Then top them off with MacGyver-esque weapons designed solely to capture victims in the most painful possible way. Straight out of Indiana Jones.

I also like bugbears (giant furry goblins that pad around stealthily? Yes, please), gnolls (scavenger packs roaming the barrens), ghouls (from Lovecraft to Niven, there's just something visceral), gnomes (before the illusionist rubbed off), beholders (scrap some of the backstory and call it what it is: a deliberately-designed war machine, gone rogue), and the death knight (the fallen paladin turned black and dead, with a 20-dice *fireball*).

05-16-2010, 04:10 AM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
Eh? That isn't in my book...

Did you read the page after the zombie entry? The teddy bear does not have a full write up, just a passing mention in the "how to design creatures" essay.

05-16-2010, 04:29 AM

Hexmage

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**
...beholders (scrap some of the backstory and call it what it is: a deliberately-designed war machine, gone rogue)...

From what I understand, that's actually the official backstory for beholders in the Eberron setting.

05-16-2010, 05:54 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**
Did you read the page after the zombie entry? The teddy bear does not have a full write up, just a passing mention in the "how to design creatures" essay.

You mean the instructions for the blank monster form?

05-16-2010, 07:07 PM

DMH

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**
You mean the instructions for the blank monster form?

Yes. It is under the combat statistics entry.

05-16-2010, 11:49 PM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hexmage**

From what I understand, that's actually the official backstory for beholders in the Eberron setting.

Good.

Because the "rogue mother-god barfs up eggs across the universe" from *Lords of Madness* struck me as a little silly.

05-17-2010, 01:18 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Hexmage**

From what I understand, that's actually the official backstory for beholders in the Eberron setting.

That's how I treat Beholders in my homebrew campaign too. They're biomechanical war machines, made ages ago by the **Great Race of Yith** to defend them in an Elder War. Like a lot of folk I mixed a bit of Lovecraft in my D&D.

05-17-2010, 01:31 AM

Hexmage

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Sleeper**

Good.

Because the "rogue mother-god barfs up eggs across the universe" from *Lords of Madness* struck me as a little silly.

The origin for beholders in the default Points of Light setting is kind of like that. Basically, there's this area deep in the Underdark known as the Hatchlands where beholder "eggs" made from stone spontaneously generate. The eggs are vessels containing the essence of the Far Realm. Also, the Great Mother's existence is more of a theory than an absolute fact.

05-17-2010, 01:36 AM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **DMH**

Did you read the page after the zombie entry? The teddy bear does not have a full write up, just a passing mention in the "how to design creatures" essay.

For the benefit of those without the Monstrous Manual to hand, the relevant passage is:

Quote:

Originally Posted by **MM**

Combat Statistics: This includes such values as Hit Dice and Armor Class. They should match the physical description of the monster. A well-designed monster fights the way it looks. A small, fuzzy creature with big, soft eyes should not have 25 Hit Dice, an Armor Class of -8, and swoop through the air to attack. The amount of damage done should reflect the weapon being used. Avoid the tendency to give monsters excessive Hit Dice and damage capabilities. The DM is the only person who gets a kick from seeing a PC suffer 40 points of damage in one round; players don't find that amusing at all.

I'm not sure that's good advice. You can easily have a monster that deceives its prey by seeming harmless, and I'd feel no compunction about including one if I left clues lying around - the traditional piles of gnawed bones and terrified locals whispering warnings of the "Death Beast".

Appearances can be deceptive, especially in a world with illusion and polymorph magic.

Besides, what about the PC/NPCs - a high level character can look like an ordinary human but have more hit points than a dragon. If they're a monk they may even do more damage with their bare hands than a dragon does with claws and fangs!

My main objection to "Fluffy the Killer monster" is that it might lead to rampant quoting from **Monty Python and the Holy Grail**. Few things are better for slowing a game session.

05-17-2010, 03:30 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I'm not sure that's good advice. You can easily have a monster that deceives its prey by seeming harmless,

Obviously, the 2nd ed writers weren't fond of the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing:

<http://www.headinjurytheater.com/ima...20clothing.jpg>

05-19-2010, 03:56 AM

Celiasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

So who's going to start our first Compendium thread?

05-19-2010, 06:38 AM

Thordic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

What compendium are we starting with? Dark Sun won the poll, with Planescape in second.

Does noisms want to run the next one as well? He did a great job with this one but if he's worn out I'm sure someone else can take over.

05-19-2010, 06:48 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Or chronologically, skipping over the duplicates (the Monstrous Manual came out in 1993):

1989

MC1: Monstrous Compendium Volume One

MC2: Monstrous Compendium Volume Two

MC3: Monstrous Compendium Volume Three: Forgotten Realms Appendix

MC4: Monstrous Compendium Dragonlance Appendix

1990

MC5: Monstrous Compendium Greyhawk Adventures Appendix

MC6: Monstrous Compendium Kara-Tur Appendix

MC7: Monstrous Compendium Spelljammer Appendix

1991

MC8: Monstrous Compendium Outer Planes Appendix

MC9: Monstrous Compendium Spelljammer Appendix

MC10: Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix

MC11: Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix

1992

MC12: Monstrous Compendium Dark Sun Appendix: Terrors of the Desert

MC13: Monstrous Compendium Al-Qadim Appendix

MC14: Monstrous Compendium Fiend Folio Appendix

1993

MC15: Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix II: Children of the Night

1994

Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume One

Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix

Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix

Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendix III: Creatures of Darkness

1995

Dark Sun Monstrous Compendium Appendix II: Terrors Beyond Tyr

Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Two

Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix II

1996

Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Three

Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendices I & II

1998

Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Four

Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix III

Though chronologically by theme (all Ravenloft, etc.) wouldn't be bad, either.

05-19-2010, 09:22 AM

Celisasu

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Since Dark Sun won the poll, who has Dark Sun I and is willing to start? Or does anyone have Dark Sun I as a PDF and is willing to give it to someone else who'll start? Either or.

05-19-2010, 06:18 PM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thordic**

What compendium are we starting with? Dark Sun won the poll, with Planescape in second.

Does noisms want to run the next one as well? He did a great job with this one but if he's worn out I'm sure someone else can take over.

I'm a bit burned out, to be honest, so I'd like to at least take a short break! ;)

05-19-2010, 10:02 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Celisasu**

Since Dark Sun won the poll, who has Dark Sun I and is willing to start? Or does anyone have Dark Sun I as a PDF and is willing to give it to someone else who'll start? Either or.

Starting with Dark Sun's fine by me.

Anyone who doesn't have the original Dark Sun MCs but I think I can follow along with the information there is on athas.org.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **noisms**

I'm a bit burned out, to be honest, so I'd like to at least take a short break! ;)

Take your time! So long as whoever starts the "Let's Read the Dark Sun Monstrous Compendiums" thread posts a link to it here we'll be alright.

05-19-2010, 10:16 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

Obviously, the 2nd ed writers weren't fond of the Wolf in Shep's Clothing:

Aww, isn't it cute.:o

I can remember when that critter first crawled forth from a crashed spacecraft in the Barrier Peaks, blinking its eyestalks in wonder at the new world it had discovered.

Although it doesn't match the glory of an AC -8, HD 25 cute flying furball.

Now I'm getting tempted to stat up a Flying Vorpall Rabbit....:D

05-20-2010, 12:16 AM

Thordic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Do we really need ONE guy to do it all? I'm sure multiple people have the book and/or PDF.

Why not just try to average a post a day? So if you go look at the thread, there hasn't been a new monster posted in 48 hours, and you have the book, you can type up the next one?

If two people end up typing up the same monster because they were doing it at the same time, c'est la vie.

Not everyone has noisms superhuman stamina, and this way the thread doesn't crap out and die if someone disappears, goes on vacation, etc.

05-20-2010, 01:26 AM

noisms

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Thordic**

Do we really need ONE guy to do it all? I'm sure multiple people have the book and/or PDF.

Why not just try to average a post a day? So if you go look at the thread, there hasn't been a new monster posted in 48 hours, and you have the book, you can type up the next one?

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Not everyone has noisms superhuman stamina, and this way the thread doesn't crap out and die if someone disappears, goes on vacation, etc.

I think we certainly can do without central planning. We need to think like Hayek, not Stalin! ;)

Whoever wants to start one of these threads should just go right ahead and start, in my view - devil take the hindmost.

05-20-2010, 02:06 AM

Asmodai

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

I doubt I can match your prose, however, I've taken the initiative to start a thread here: <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=515916>

05-20-2010, 02:41 AM

Mr. Teapot

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **JRM**

I can remember when that critter first crawled forth from a crashed spacecraft in the Barrier Peaks, blinking its eyestalks in wonder at the new world it had discovered.

You know, that makes me realize something. For all that the Wolf-In-Sheep's-Clothing is used as a D&D punchline, it is basically a Mimic with a more coherent backstory. It's an alien from a crashed spaceship, whose method of hunting involves identifying a harmless/enticing part of its environment and luring in enemies. That's way more sane than about half of all D&D monsters.

05-21-2010, 11:22 PM

JRM

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mr. Teapot**

You know, that makes me realize something. For all that the Wolf-In-Sheep's-Clothing is used as a D&D punchline, it is basically a Mimic with a more coherent backstory. It's an alien from a crashed spaceship, whose method of hunting involves identifying a harmless/enticing part of its environment and luring in enemies. That's way more sane than about half of all D&D monsters.

I agree. Old sheepish-wolfie is sorely maligned, it's a far more plausible predator than many of D&D's monsters, if not most of them. Just because the rabbit on its head looks a bit goofy, people pick on the poor old thing.

Then again, the half-insanity can be one of the appealing things about some of D&D's monsters...

06-03-2010, 10:27 PM

EmperorSeth

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Well, I assume this thread is completely dead at this point, but did any of the new ones people suggested get started up? If so, I think we should link them at the end here. Continue the line, if you will.

06-03-2010, 10:57 PM

Thordic

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

Quote:

Originally Posted by **EmperorSeth** me this thread is completely dead at this point, but did any of the new ones people suggested get started up? If so, I think we should link them at the end here. Continue the line, if you will.

<http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=515916>

Dark Sun Appendix is there.

Not sure if we are going to go through both Dark Sun MM's before we move on to Planescape, but Planescape is next. Then maybe the Annuals? We've got enough books to keep us going for quite a while.

I have the first two Planescape MM's (the third one is ridiculously expensive used), and all four Annuals.

06-04-2010, 12:06 AM

Sleeper

Re: [Let's Read] AD&D 2e Monstrous Manual [Part V, Spr~ ?]

We can't rely on posting links to the new threads at the end of this one. It's over 1,000 posts, which means it's due to be locked.

Clicking on the "let's read" or "ad&d 2nd edition" tags at the bottom of the thread is another good way to find any sequels.